

LETTERS
OF
ABELARD AND ELOISA.
WITH
A PARTICULAR ACCOUNT
OF THEIR
LIVES, AMOURS,
AND
MISFORTUNES.

WITH AN ACCOUNT OF
THE PARACLETE,
BY THE REV. H. MILLS.

LONDON:
Printed for T. HUGHES, 35, Ludgate Street.

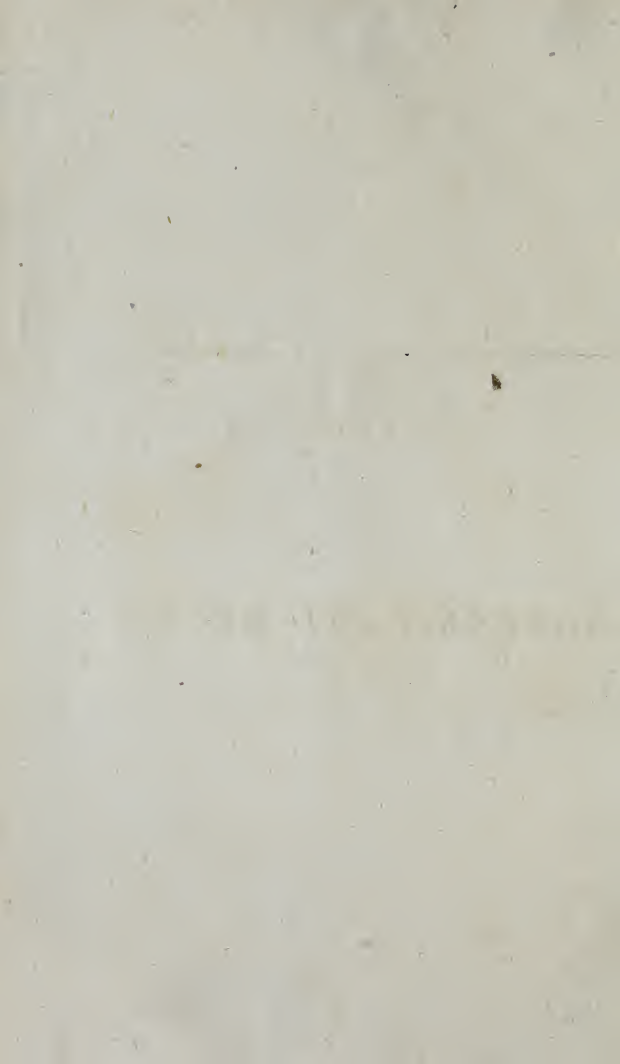
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ABELARD AND ELOISA.



*Abelard meets Eloisa in the Garden where
they Plan the means of her Elopement.*

Page 8.

R. Morrison

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(The Convent where are deposited the ashes of both.)

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THE
HISTORY
OF
ABELARD AND ELOISA.

PETER ABELARD was born in the village of Palais, in Britany. He lived in the twelfth century, in the reigns of Lewis the Gross, and Lewis the Young. His father's name was Beranger, a gentleman of a considerable and wealthy family. He took care to give his children a liberal and pious education: especially his eldest son Peter, on whom he endeavoured to bestow all possible improvements, because there appeared in him an extraordinary vivacity of wit, joined with sweetness of temper, and all imaginable presages of a great man.

When he had made some advancement in learning, he grew so fond of his books, that lest affairs of the world might interrupt his proficiency in them, he quitted his birthright to his younger brother, and applied himself entirely to the studies of philosophy and divinity.

He finished his studies at Paris, where learning was then in a very flourishing condition. In this city he found that famous professor of philosophy, William des Champeaux, and soon became his favorite scholar; but this did not last long. The professor was so hard put to it to answer the subtle objections of his new scholar, that he grew uneasy

with him. The school soon run into parties. The senior scholars, transported with envy against Abelard, seconded their master's resentment. All this served only to increase the young man's presumption, who now thought himself sufficiently qualified to set up a school of his own. For this purpose he chose an advantageous place, which was the town of Melun, ten leagues from Paris, where the French court resided at that time. Champeaux did all that he could to hinder the erecting of this school; but some of the great courtiers being his enemies, the opposition he made to it only promoted the design of his rival.

The reputation of this new professor made a marvellous progress, and eclipsed that of Champeaux. These successes swelled Abelard so much, that he removed his school to Corbeil, in order to engage his enemy the closer in more frequent disputations. But excessive application to study brought upon him a long and dangerous sickness, which constrained him to return to his native air.

After he had spent two years in his own country, he made a second adventure to Paris, where he found that his old antagonist Champeaux had resigned his chair to another, and was retired into a convent of Carons Regular, among whom he continued his lectures. Abelard attacked him with such fury, that he quickly forced him to renounce his tenets. Whereupon the poor monk became so despicable, and his antagonist in such great esteem, that nobody went to the lectures of Champeaux; and the very man who succeeded him in his professorship listed under Abelard, and became his scholar.

He was scarce fixed in his chair, before he found himself exposed more than ever to the strokes of the most cruel envy. Endeavours were used to do him ill offices by all those who were any ways disaffected to him; another professor was put into his place who

had thought it his duty to submit to Abelard ; in short, so many enemies were raised against him, that he was forced to retreat from Paris to Melun, and there revive his logic lectures. But this held not long ; for hearing that Champeaux, with all his infantry, was retired into a country village, he came and posted himself on Mount St. Genevieve, where he erected a new school, like a kind of battery against him whom Champeaux had left to teach in Paris.

Champeaux, understanding that his substitute was thus besieged in his school, brought the Regular Canons back again to their monastery. But this, instead of relieving his friend, caused all his scholars to desert him ; at which the poor philosopher was so mortified, that he followed the example of his patron Champeaux, and turned monk too.

The dispute now lay wholly between Abelard and Champeaux, who renewed it with great warmth on both sides : but the senior had not the best of it. While it was depending, Abelard was obliged to visit his father and mother, who according to the fashion of those times, had resolved to forsake the world, and retire into convents, in order to devote themselves more seriously to the care of their salvation.

Having assisted at the admission of his parents into their respective monasteries, and received their blessing, he returned to Paris, where, during his absence, his rival had been promoted to the bishopric of Chalons. And now, being in a condition to quit his school without any suspicion of flying from his enemy, he resolved to apply himself wholly to divinity.

To this end he removed to Laon, where one Anselm read divinity-lectures with good reputation. But Abelard was so little satisfied with the old man's abilities, that he took a resolution, for the future, to bear no other master than the Holy Scriptures.

Abelard, together with these, read the ancient fathers and doctors of the church, in which he spent whole days and nights, and profited so well, that, instead of returning to Anselm's lectures, he took up the same employment, and began to expound the prophet Ezekiel to some of his fellow pupils: he performed this part so agreeably, and in so easy a method, that he soon got a crowd of auditors.

The jealous Anselm could not long bear this: he quickly found means to get the new lecturer silenced. Upon this Abelard removed to Paris once more, where he proceeded with his public exposition on Ezekiel, and soon acquired the same reputation for his divinity he had before gained for his philosophy.—His eloquence and learning procured him an incredible number of scholars from all parts.

Not far from the place where Abelard read his lectures, lived one doctor Fulbert, a canon of the church of Notre Dame. This canon had a niece, named Eloisa, in his house, whom he educated with great care and affection. Some writers say, that she was the good man's natural daughter; but that, to prevent a public scandal, he gave out that she was his niece, by his sister, who upon her death-bed had charged him with her education.

Whatever she was for birth, she was a very engaging woman; and if she was not a perfect beauty, she appeared such at least in Abelard's eyes. Her person was well proportioned, her features regular, her eyes sparkling, her lips well formed, her complexion animated, her hair fine, and her aspect sweet and agreeable.

As soon as Abelard, who was now in the 27th or 28th year of his age, had seen her, and conversed with her, the charms of her wit and beauty made such an impression upon his heart, that he presently conceived a most violent passion for her, and resolved to make it his whole endeavour to win her

affections. He soon met with the luckiest opportunity in the world. Fulbert, who had the greatest affection imaginable for his niece, finding her to have a good share of natural wit, and a particular genius for learning, thought himself obliged to improve the talents which nature had so liberally bestowed on her. He had already put her to learn several languages, which she quickly came to understand so well, that her fame began to spread itself abroad, and the wit and learning of Eloisa was every where discoursed of. And though her uncle, for his own share, was no great scholar, he was very solicitous that his niece should have all possible improvements. He was willing, therefore, she should have masters to instruct her in what she had a mind to learn; but he loved his money; and this kept him from providing for her education so well as she desired.

Abelard, who knew Eloisa's inclinations, and the temper of her uncle, thought this an opportunity favourable to his design. He was already well acquainted with Fulbert, as being his brother canon in the same church. He therefore told him one day, in familiarity, that he was at a loss for some house to board in; "and if you could find room for me," said he, "in your's, I leave it to you to name the terms."

Fulbert, immediately considering that by this means he should provide an able master for his niece, who instead of taking money of him, offered to pay him well for his board, embraced his proposal with all the joy imaginable, gave him a thousand caresses, and desired he would consider him for the future as one ambitious of the strictest friendship with him.

Some time after the canon had taken Abelard into his house, as they were discoursing one day about things somewhat above Fulbert's capacity, the latter turned the discourse insensibly to the good qualities of his niece: he informed Abelard of the excel-

lency of her wit, and how strong a propensity she had to improve in learning ; and withal made it his earnest request, that he would take the pains to instruct her. Abelard assured him he was ready to do all he could for her improvement, and if she was not like other women, who hate to learn any thing beyond their needle, he would spare no pains to make Eloisa answer the hopes which her uncle had conceived of her.

The canon was transported with the civility of the young doctor ; he committed her entirely to his care, and begged of him to treat her with the authority of a master ; not only to chide her, but even to correct her, whenever she was guilty of any neglect or disobedience to his commands.

Abelard naturally made use of the freedom which was given him. He saw his beautiful creature every hour, he set her lessons every day, and was extremely pleased to see what proficiency she made. Eloisa, for her part, was so taken with her master, that she liked nothing so well as what she learned from him.

It is no difficult matter to make a girl of eighteen fall in love ; and Abelard, having so much wit and agreeable humour, made a much greater progress in her affections, than she did in the lessons which he taught her. So that in a short time she could deny him nothing.

Fulbert had a country house at Corbeil, to which the lovers often resorted, under pretence of applying themselves more closely to their studies. There they conversed freely, and for five or six months gave themselves up entirely to the pleasures of a mutual passion. They took advantage of that privacy which study and contemplation require, without subjecting themselves to the censure of those who observed it.

Abelard being thus enchanted with the caresses of his mistress, neglected all his serious and import-

art affairs. His performances in public were wretched: his scholars perceived it, and soon guessed the reason. In short, our lovers who were in their own opinion the happiest pair in the world, kept so little guard, that their amours were every where talked of, and all the world saw plainly that the sciences were not always the subject of their conversation. Only Fulbert, under whose nose all this was done, was the last man that heard any thing of it. At last so many discoveries were daily made to him, that he could not help believing something: he therefore watched them so closely, that he had one day an opportunity of receiving ocular satisfaction that the reports he had heard were true. In short, he surprised them together. The result was, a cruel separation.

Abelard, finding it impossible to live without his dear Eloisa, endeavoured to settle a correspondence with her by her maid Agaton, who was a handsome brown girl, well-shaped, and likely enough to have pleased a man who was not otherwise engaged. But what a surprise was it to our doctor, to find this girl refuse his money, and, in recompence of the services she was to do him with her mistress, demanded no less a reward than his heart, and making him at once a plain declaration of love! Abelard, who could love none but Eloisa, turned from her abruptly without answering a word. But a rejected woman is a dangerous creature. Agaton knew well how to revenge the affront put upon her, and failed not to acquaint Fulbert with Abelard's offers to her, without saying a word how she had been disobliged. Fulbert thought it was time to look about him. He thanked the maid for her care, and entered into measures with her, how to keep Abelard from visiting his niece.

The doctor was now more perplexed than ever; he had now no way left but to apply himself to

Eloisa's singing-master; and the gold which the maid refused prevailed with him. By this means Abelard conveyed a letter to Eloisa; in which he acquainted her, that he intended to come and see her at night, and that the way he had contrived was over the garden-wall, by the help of a ladder of cords. This project succeeded, and brought them together. After the first transports of this short interview, Eloisa, who had found some more than ordinary symptoms within her, acquainted her lover with it. She had informed him of it before by a letter and now, having this opportunity to consult about it, they agreed that she should go to a sister of his in Britany, at whose house she might be privately brought to bed. But before they parted, he endeavoured to comfort her, and make her easy in this distress, by giving her assurances of marriage. When Eloisa heard this proposal, she peremptorily rejected it, and gave such reasons for her refusal, as left Abelard in the greatest astonishment.

Abelard, who was willing to lose no time, lest his dear Eloisa should fall into her uncle's hands, disguised her in the habit of a nun, and sent her away with the greatest dispatch, hoping that, after she was brought to bed, he should have more leisure to persuade her to marriage, by which they might screen themselves from the reproach which must otherwise come upon them, as soon as the business should be publicly known.

The news that Eloisa was privately withdrawn soon made a great noise in the neighbourhood; and reaching Fulbert's ears, filled him with grief and melancholy. Besides that he had a very tender affection for his niece, and could not live without her, he had the utmost resentment of the affront which Abelard had put upon him, by abusing the freedom he had allowed him; and when he saw Abelard, and heard from him the reason why Eloisa

was departed, never was man in such a passion. He abandoned himself to the utmost rage, despair, and thirst of revenge. All the affronts, reproaches, and menaces that could be thought of were heaped upon Abelard; who was, poor man, very passive, and ready to give both him and his niece all the satisfaction which this sort of injury required. "Will you marry her, then?" said Fulbert, interrupting him "Yes," replied Abelard; "but the marriage might for some time be kept secret."—"No," says the canon; "the dishonour you have done my niece is public, and the reparation you make her shall be so too." But Abelard told him, that, since they were to be one family, he hoped he would consider his interest as his own. At last, after a great many entreaties, Fulbert seemed content it should be as Abelard desired; that he should marry Eloisa after she was brought to bed, and that in the meantime the business should be kept secret.

Abelard, having given his scholars a vacation, returned into Britany, to visit his designed spouse, and to acquaint her with what had passed. She was not at all concerned at her uncle's displeasure; but that which troubled her was the resolution which she saw her lover had taken to marry her. She endeavoured to persuade him from it with all the arguments she could think of. She begun with representing to him the wrong he did himself in thinking of marriage: that as she never loved him but for his own sake, she preferred his glory, reputation, and interest before her own.

Abelard was still so enamoured with Eloisa, after she had given him the utmost proofs of her love, that all the eloquence of the lady could not persuade him that he wronged himself in thinking to marry her. He knew so well how to represent to her the necessity of marriage, the discourse which he had about it with Fulbert, his rage if they declined it, and how

dangerous it might be to both of them, that at last she consented, but with an inconceivable reluctance, to do whatever he pleased.

Abelard was willing to be near his mistress till she was brought to bed, which in a short time she was of a boy. As soon as Eloisa was fit to go abroad, Abelard carried her to Paris, where they were married in the most private manner that could be, having no other company but Fulbert, and two or three particular friends. However, the wedding quickly came to be known. Fulbert, who was less concerned to keep his word, than to cover the reproach of his family, took care to spread it abroad. But Eloisa, who loved Abelard a thousand times better than she did herself, and always valued her dear doctor's honour above her own, denied it with the most solemn protestations, and did all she could to make the world believe her. In short, she denied it so constantly, and with such earnestness, that she was generally believed. Many people thought, and boldly affirmed, that the doctor's enemies had spread this story on purpose to lessen his character. This report came to Fulbert's ears, who, knowing that Eloisa was the sole author of it, fell into so outrageous a passion at her, that after a thousand reproaches and menaces, he proceeded to use her barbarously. Abelard, who loved her never the worse for being his wife, could not see this many days with patience. He resolved, therefore, to order matters so as to deliver her from this state of persecution. To this purpose they consulted together what course was to be taken, and agreed that Eloisa should retire into a convent, where she should take the habit of a nun, all but the veil, so that she might easily come out again, when they should have a more favourable opportunity. This design was proposed, approved, and executed almost at the same time. By this means they affectually put a stop to all reports about

their marriage. But the canon was too dangerous a person to be admitted to this consultation; he would never have agreed to their proposal; nor could he hear of it without the utmost rage. It was then that he conceived a new desire of revenge, which he pursued till he executed it in the most cruel manner.

In the meantime the lovers spent their time in the most agreeable manner. Abelard made her frequent visits in the convent of Argenteuil, to which she was retired. The nuns of this abbey enjoyed a free kind of life; the grates and parlours were sufficiently open. As for Eloisa, she had such excellent qualifications as made the good sisters very fond of her, and extremely pleased that they had such an amiable companion. And as they were not ignorant what reports there were abroad, that she was married to the famous Abelard, (though she denied it to the last) the most discerning among them, observing the frequent visits of the doctor, easily imagined that she had reasons for keeping herself private, and connived at their meetings.

Some of them, whom Eloisa loved above the rest, and in whom she put great confidence, were not a little aiding and assisting in the private interviews which she had with Abelard, and in giving him opportunities to enter the convent.

These excesses had then their charms, but in the end had fatal consequences. The furious canon, persisting in his design of being revenged on Abelard, notwithstanding his marriage with his niece, found means to corrupt a domestic of the unfortunate doctor, who gave admittance into his master's chamber to some assassins hired by Fulbert who, seized him in his sleep, and cruelly deprived him of his manhood, but not his life.

This action of Fulbert was too tragical to pass unpunished; the traiterous servant and one of the assassins were seized, and condemned to lose their

eyes, and to suffer what they had done to Abelard. But Fulbert denying he had any share in the action, saved himself from the punishment, with the loss only of his benefices.

Shame and sorrow had no less seized Abelard than Eloisa, nor dared he ever after appear in the world. So that he resolved, immediately upon his cure, to banish himself from the sight of men, and hid himself in the darkness of a monastic life; avoiding all conversation with every kind of persons, excepting his dear Eloisa, by whose company he endeavoured to comfort himself; but she at last, though in the twenty-second year of her age, resolved to follow his example, and continue for ever in the convent of Argentueil, where she was.

Time making Abelard's misfortune familiar to him, he now entertained thoughts of ambition, and of supporting the reputation he had gained of the most learned man of his age. He began with explaining the Acts of the Apostles to the monks of the monastery of St. Dennis, to which he had retired; but the disorders of the abbey, and the debauches of the abbot, which, equally with his dignity, were superior to those of the simple monks, quickly drove him thence. He had made himself uneasy to them, by censuring their irregularity. They were glad to part with him, and he to leave them.

As soon as he had obtained leave of the abbot, he retired to Thibaud in Champagne, where he set up a school; and a great number of scholars flocked to him, not only from the most distant provinces of France, but also from Rome, Spain, England, and Germany. But Abelard did not foresee that this success and reputation would at the same time occasion new troubles. He had made himself two considerable enemies at Laon, Alberick of Rheims, and Lotulf of Lombardy, who, as soon as they perceived how prejudicial his reputation was to their schools,

sought all occasions to ruin him: and thought they had a lucky handle to do so from a book of his, entitled, *The Mystery of the Trinity*; this they pretended was heretical, and through the archbishop's means they procured a council at Soissons, in the year 1121; and, without suffering Abelard to make any defence, ordered his book to be burnt by his own hands, and himself to be confined to the convent of St. Medard.

A little after his condemnation, Abelard was ordered to return to St. Dennis. The liberty he had taken to censure the wicked lives of the monks had raised him a great many enemies. Among these was St. Bernard, not upon the same motives as those monks, but because Abelard's great wit, joined with so loose and sensual a life, gave him jealousy, who thought it impossible the heart should be defiled without the head being likewise tainted.

Scarce had he returned to St. Dennis, when one day he dropped some words, intimating he did not believe that the St. Dennis, their patron, was the areopagite mentioned in the Scripture, there being no probability that he ever was in France. This was immediately carried to the abbot, who was full of joy that he had now a handle to heighten the accusations of heresy against him with some crime against the state. The abbot immediately assembled all the house, and declared he would deliver up to the secular power a person who had dared to reflect upon the honour of the kingdom and of the crown. Abelard, very rightly judging that such threatenings were not to be despised, fled by night to Champagne, to a cloister of the monks of Troyes, and there patiently waited till the storm should be over. After the death of this abbot, which, very lucky for him, happened soon after his flight, he obtained leave to live where he pleased, though it was not without using some cunning. He knew the monks of so rich a house had fallen into great excesses, and were

very obnoxious to the court, who would not fail to make their profit of it; he therefore procured it should be represented to the council, as very disadvantageous to his majesty's interest, that a person who was continually censuring the lives of his brethren should continue any longer with them. This was immediately understood, and orders given to some great man at court to demand of the abbot and monks, why they kept a person in their house whose conduct was disagreeable to them; and, far from being an ornament to the society, was a continual vexation, by publishing their faults? This being very opportunely moved to the new abbot, he gave Abelard leave to retire to what cloister he pleased.

Abelard now resolved to found a new society, consisting chiefly of monks. To this purpose he chose a solitude in the diocese of Troyes, and upon some ground which was given him by the bishop he built a little house and a chapel, which he dedicated to the most Holy Trinity. Men of learning were then scarce, and the desire of science was beginning to spread itself. Our exile was enquired after and found. Scholars crowded to him from all parts: they built little huts, and were very liberal to their master for his lectures; they enlarged the chapel, building that and their professor's house with wood and stone. Abelard, to continue the memory of the comfort he had received in this desert, dedicated his new-built chapel to the Holy Ghost, by the name of the Paraclete or Comforter.

The envy of Alberick and Lotulf, which had long since persecuted him, was strangely revived, upon seeing so many scholars flock to him from all parts, notwithstanding the inconveniences of the place, and in contempt of the masters who might so commodiously have been found in the towns and cities. They now more than ever sought occasions to trouble him; the name

of Paraclete furnished them with one; they gave out that this novelty was a consequence of his former heresy, and that it was no more lawful to dedicate churches to the Holy Ghost, than to God the Father: that this title was a subtle art of instilling that poison which he durst not spread openly; and a consequence of his heretical doctrine, which had been condemned already by a council. They spread such scandal against him, that they prejudiced his principal friends; and thus made his life so bitter to him that he was upon the point of leaving Christendom.

The duke of Britany, informed of his misfortunes, and of the barbarity of his enemies, named him to the abbey of St. Guildas, in the diocese of Vannes, at the desire of the monks, who had already elected him for their superior. Here he thought he had found a refuge from the rage of his enemies, but in reality he had only changed one trouble for another. The profligate lives of the monks, and the arbitrariness of a lord, who had deprived them of the greater part of their revenues, so that they were obliged to maintain their mistresses and children at their own private expence, occasioned him a thousand vexations and dangers. They several times endeavoured to poison him in his ordinary diet, but proving wholly unsuccessful that way, they tried to do it in the holy sacrament.

Whilst Abelard thus suffered in his abbey by his monks, the nuns of Argentueil, of whom Eloisa was prioress, grew so licentious that Suggest, abbot of St. Dennis, taking advantage of their irregularities, got possession of their monastery. He sent their original writings to Rome, and having obtained the answer he desired, he expelled the nuns, and established in their place monks of his order.

Eloisa, at her departure from the convent of Argentueil, applied to her husband; who, by the permission of the bishop of Troyes, gave her the house

and chapel of the Paraclete with its appendages, and placing there some nuns, founded a nunnery. Pope Innocent II. confirmed this donation in the year 1131. This is the origin of the abbey of the Paraclete, of which Eloisa was the first abbess.

After Abelard had settled Eloisa here, he made frequent journeys from Britany to Champagne, to take care of the interest of this rising house, and to ease himself from the vexations of his own abbey. But slander so perpetually followed this unhappy man, that though his present condition was universally known, he was reproached with a remaining voluptuous passion for his former mistress. This induced him to take his last farewell of her, and retire to his abbey in Britany.

About ten years after, his enemies, who had resolved to persecute him to the last, were careful not to let him enjoy the ease of retirement; they brought a new process of heresy against him before the archbishop of Sens. He desired he might have the liberty of defending his doctrine before a public assembly, and it was granted him. Upon this account the council of Sens was assembled, in which Louis the VIIth assisted in person, in the year 1140. St. Bernard was the accuser, and delivered to the assembly some propositions drawn from Abelard's book, which were read in the council. This accusation gave Abelard such fears, and was managed with so much inveterate malice by his enemies, and with such great unfairness in drawing consequences he never thought of; that imagining he had friends at Rome who would protect his innocence, he made an appeal to the pope. The council, notwithstanding his appeal, condemned his book, but did not meddle with his person; and gave an account of the whole proceeding to pope Innocent II., praying him to confirm their sentence. St. Bernard had been so early in prepossessing the pontiff, that he

got the sentence confirmed before Abelard heard any thing of it, or had any time to present himself before the tribunal to which he had appealed. His holiness ordered besides, that Abelard's books should be burnt, himself confined, and for ever prohibited from teaching.

Some time after Abelard's condemnation the pope was appeased, at the solicitation of the abbot of Clugni, who received this unfortunate gentleman in his monastery with great humanity, reconciled him with St. Bernard, and admitted him to be a religious of his society.

This was Abelard's last retirement, in which he found all manner of kindness; he read lectures to the monks, and was equally humble and laborious. At last, growing weak and afflicted with a complication of diseases, he was sent to the priory of St. Marcell upon the Soane, near Chalons, a very agreeable place, where he died the 21st of April, 1142, in the 63d year of his age. His corpse was sent to the chapel of the Paraclete, to Eloisa, (who survived her unfortunate husband 20 years), to be interred, according to her former request of him, and to his own desire.

The manner of Eloisa's taking the veil is thus described by a writer of her time:—

“On the day appointed for the ceremony the bishop of Paris officiated. He gave his benediction to the veil that, according to the custom of the times, was placed upon the altar, and which the novice was to advance from her seat in the choir to take and put on her head. Eloisa was now advancing with a firm step towards the altar, to receive this emblem of seclusion from the world, and of oblivion to its pleasures, when a great number of persons of all ranks, who were present at this mournful ceremony, struck with admiration at her beauty, which was increased by her extreme youth, and the general

opinion that was gone forth in the world of her mental accomplishments and acquisitions, felt the deepest commiseration for the sacrifice she was going to perform. Some persons of the greatest consequence amongst them approached her, and entreated her, with tears in their eyes, to give up her intention; and made use of arguments so pressing that she appeared for a few minutes not insensible to what they said to her. She was heard to sigh bitterly, but her sighs arose from a motive different from what the surrounding multitude supposed. Abelard, who was always present to her imagination, was the only cause. She was heard to say to herself, 'Alas! unhappy victim, is it then possible that the rigour of fortune has so violently oppressed so distinguished a man! How came I to become his wife, merely to render him miserable! No, no,' added the willing victim, 'I was unworthy of being united with him, and since I am the cause of all his miseries, it is but just that I should suffer the punishment for them!' Having spoken thus, she tore herself away from the hands of the persons that were attempting to hold her, and ran up to the altar as to a funeral pile upon which she was to consummate the sacrifice. She then, with the greatest reverence, kissed the holy cloth that covered it, took the black veil from it with her own hands, covered her face with it, and pronounced her vows with a courage and firm tone of voice superior to the natural timidity of her sex."

Her austerity as a nun is thus described by the abbot of Clugni.

"Her tears had long since destroyed her beauty. A sad paleness took place of her natural vermilion; her eyes lost all their fire; and her whole frame was broken down by grief. She looked upon herself as the disconsolate widow mentioned by St. Paul, whose only occupation is to weep and to lament. After the death of Abelard, she hardly ever went

into the monastery, except to attend the offices of the church; and except the times of her attendance in the choir, when she had always her veil thrown over her face to hide her tears, she remained shut up in her cell at prayers, or was upon her knees before the tomb of Abelard. She received with transport the absolution of Abelard, sent to her by his superior, the abbot of Clugni, thus worded:

“I, Peter abbot of Clugni, who having received Peter Abelard into the number of my monks, and who, after having dug up his body secretly, have presented it to Eloisa, abbess of the Paraclete, and her sisters, declare, that, by the authority of God all-powerful, and all saints, I absolve him from all his sins, in virtue of the authority which my office affords me.

“*Requiescat in Pace.*”

The following curious account of the Convent of the Paraclete, (of which Eloisa was the lady abbess, and where the bodies of both her and Abelard were laid) is taken from a little book intituled “*Bagatelles*,” written by the reverend Andrew Hervey Mills:

* * * * *

—“Previous to my water-rout to Paris, I took the *coche d'eau* to Châlons on the Saone; having formerly passed the said city with the usual inattention of my countrymen, and with the ill-fortune of no kind friend to give me intelligence that the real tomb of Abelard was at a Benedictine convent, dedicated to St. Marcell, up the avenue which adorns the banks of the Saone, within an English mile of the city; though his body was removed to the Paraclete, in pity to the sufferings of the so ill-fated Eloisa.

“The prior was an Englishman, as they style him,

though a native of Ireland. He was, unfortunately, at Paris; but, in his absence, the Pere — did the honours of his superior in particular, and of the convent in general, in a very masterly manner.

“The fraternity is not numerous; but their estates, as I heard, are very considerable. By these means the hospitality seems amazing, on a bare view of so small a convent. As I went in the morning, the church was of course open: I saw the tomb in question immediately. Abelard is in a recumbent posture, and the sculpture exceeds that of the then age in general; I mean in France; for Italian genius in the chisel way had not, as now, set her foot on this side the Alps; as the numerous fine monuments since that time have discovered, by the general encouragement of sovereigns. Abelard was on a visit, or perhaps a kind of disputed match, being common to this convent in those days; his real home being now the famous Chartreusr, among the mountains of the Beaujolois.

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“After my arrival at Paris, I, in a few days, embarked to see the Paraclete, being at the head of the Seine almost, and within two miles of a town called Nogent sur Seine.

“In the evening of the second day, having travelled all night, we arrived at Nogent sur Seine. On my landing it was very natural to wish a little exercise, after a boat-confinement of near three days; and, on asking how far off the convent of Paraclete was situate, the captain answered, ‘That man in the purple livery is servant to the abbess—is come here for letters, parcels, and other like commissions from Paris, as usual on the arrival of our boat; and he will conduct you there.

“The moon shone very bright; and it being near the vintage, do confess I never had a more elegant

evening walk. I soon found, as the clock struck ten on our approach to the convent, that it would be impossible to reconnoitre any thing that night ; but my walk was so far of service, besides exercise, that the servant had taken care to spread the report of a gentleman who was come from England purposely, as he thought and said, on a pilgrimage to the Paraclete, the next morning I found every thing prepared to receive a stranger according to all the laws of convents ; which are often hospitals, (*hospitaliers*,) as abounding in all the acts of hospitality.

“ You may imagine the environs of the Paraclete gave me pleasure, though I could not be admitted till next day. The little river Ardusson glittered along the valley ; and as vineyards produce many glow-worms, no wonder the nightingales were inhabitants, as that is their favourite food. And it may be a hint to frail beauty, that the brightness of the said reptile is a sure step to its destruction.

“ As I knew Mr. Pope’s elegant production by heart, (I am aware many will say I might have spent my time better ; but to this I can answer in the words of Cæsar’s courtiers, who said of their master, that his memory was so strong as to forget nothing but injuries,) I amused myself by repeating slowly the said poem, as I returned to Nogent, being little more than a good English mile ; and it held, by this economy, just to the town’s end.

“ Though so early at the convent next morning, I found an elegant summer breakfast provided in the Pere St. Romain’s apartment, who was then officiating at matins. I rather choose to enter the church, and was surprised to find the great altar due west, contrary to all rules of church building, and only countenanced by one in Lombard-street, which is north and south.

“ On my standing up at the grille, (which separates the choir from the church,) one of the sisters

(whose office is to receive alms, and bear messages of business to any individual of the convent, so practised in all nunneries,) asked me if I wanted any particular person. I told her my errand was only to see the church; on which she retired to her stall and devotion.

“ The Pere St. Romain having finished the service and undressed himself, (I observed, while he laid by his robes in the sacristy, he repeated very fast certain forms, alluding to the quitting all garments in the grave,) took me by the hand into his apartment, where I found another chaplain, yet neither so polite nor learned as himself; his fame, even at Paris, being concurrent with what I found during my whole stay.

“ After the usual refreshment he said, that the abbess, being in her eighty-second year, seldom rose till noon, but that she begged I would stay till I saw her; for she was my countrywoman, though early called to be a convert from England; and was allied to the extinct families of Lifford and Stafford.

“ She was aunt to the present duke de Rochefaucault, sister to the great cardinal; and being fifth in succession abbess of that convent, pleased herself to hope it would become a kind patrimony; and that his majesty (it being a royal abbey) would graciously bestow it on that name, whenever she was called away, which she hourly expected, and daily wished.

“ As a further proof of this, the arms of the Rochefaucault family are over each gateway; and on any reparation, or new erection on the premises, the said method is always practised.

“ Before dinner St. Romain walked with me round the demesne. Mr. Pope's description is ideal, and to poetic minds easily conveyed; but I saw neither rocks or pines, nor was it a kind of ground which

ever seemed to encourage such objects. On the contrary, it was in a vale; and mountains like the Alps generally produce views of this kind.

“ I can't but say too, that the line,

“ See *in* her cell sad Eloisa spread,”

should be *near* her cell. The doors of all cells open into the common cloister. In that cloister are often tombs; and she may well be supposed to have quitted her cell (more especially in that warm part of France) for air, change of place, and refreshment.

“ The superstructure of the Paraclete is not the same as we can imagine the twelfth century to have produced; but the vaulted part, as the arches are all pointed, may most likely be such.

“ Adjoining is a low building, now inhabited by a miller, which had some marks of real antiquity; and St. Romain concurred with me in the sentiment. It seems to have been the public hall where Abelard might have given his lectures; for in the wall on each side are small apertures, so horizontal that it has strong appearances of benches; which never rise theatrically in these buildings abroad.

“ After dinner, I had the honour of an hour's conversation with the abbess; who declared, that during thirty-two years residence there, in that character, she never had seen an Englishman; but that she believed once an equipage, which she had reason to take for an English one, stopped on the lawn, before the great gate entering the quadrangle; but before she could signify her desire of seeing, and of course entertaining, the said company, they were departed with the but too usual post-haste of my countrymen, who had just pencilled the upright of a building, which contented him; though not a stone of it was out of the quarry, perhaps, in the days of Abelard and Eloisa.

“ I was shewn where the bones of these so very unfortunate lovers were deposited. As it was by torch-light, I could ill remark more than that Eloisa appeared much taller than Abelard. A small plinth of brick or stone preserved the bones from being trampled on; and the abatial vault, in which they were deposited, being small, seemed much crowded.

‘ Before I arrived at this mansion of the dead, they shewed me all the vaulted part of the former church and private chapel, which were now well filled with wine. Magazines of this kind are often erected, even for sale, where convents were not wealthy enough in lands or public stock to support themselves; and in countries where wine is not the manufactory, they have resort to boarders or pensioners, to maintain themselves; the value of money being altered, as in all countries. In this convent are only seventy-two sisters.

“ The pere St. Romain concluded his benevolence by attending me part of the way to Troyes, one of the capitals of Champagne; and from whence the Troyes-weight originally was named.”

LETTERS
OF
ABELARD AND ELOISA.

LETTER I.

ABELARD TO PHILINTUS.

It may be proper to acquaint the Reader, that the following letter was written by Abelard to a friend, to comfort him under some afflictions which had befallen him, by a recital of his own sufferings, which had been much heavier. It contains a particular account of his amour with Eloisa, and the unhappy consequences of it. This letter was written several years after Abelard's separation from Eloisa.

The last time we were together, Philintus, you gave me a melancholy account of your misfortunes : I was sensibly touched with the relation, and, like a true friend, bore a share in your griefs. What did I not say to stop your tears ? I laid before you all the reasons philosophy could furnish, which I thought might any ways soften the strokes of fortune ; but all these endeavours have proved useless ; grief, I perceive, has wholly seized your spirits ; and your prudence, far from assisting, seems quite to have forsaken you. But my skilful friendship has found out an expedient to relieve you. Attend to me a moment, hear but the story of my misfortunes, and

yours, Philintus, will be nothing, if you compare them with those of the loving and unhappy Abelard. Observe, I beseech you, at what expence I endeavour to serve you; and think this no small mark of my affection; for I am going to present you with the relation of such particulars as it is impossible for me to recollect without piercing my heart with the most sensible affliction.

You know the place where I was born; but not, perhaps, that I was born with those complexional faults which strangers charge upon our nation, an extreme lightness of temper, and great inconstancy. I frankly own it, and shall be as free to acquaint you with those good qualities which were observed in me. I had a natural vivacity and aptness for all the polite arts. My father was a gentleman, and a man of good parts; he loved the wars, but differed in his sentiments from many who follow that profession. He thought it no praise to be illiterate; but in the camp he knew how to converse at the same time with the Muses and Bellona. He was the same in the management of his family, and took equal care to form his children to the study of polite learning, as to their military exercises. As I was his eldest, and consequently his favourite son, he took more than ordinary care of my education. I had a natural genius to study, and made an extraordinary progress in it. Smitten with the love of books; and the praises which on all sides were bestowed upon me, I aspired to no reputation but what proceeded from learning. To my brothers I left the glory of battles, and the pomp of triumphs; nay more, I yielded them up my birthright and patrimony. I knew necessity was the great spur to study, and was afraid I should not merit the title of learned, if I distinguished myself from others by nothing but a more plentiful fortune. Of all the sciences, logic was the most to my taste. Such were the arms I chose to

profess. Furnished with the weapons of reasoning, I took pleasure in going to public disputations, to win trophies ; and wherever I heard that this art flourished, I ranged, like another Alexander, from province to province, to seek new adversaries, with whom I might try my strength.

The ambition I had to become formidable in logic led me at last to Paris, the centre of politeness, and where the science I was so smitten with had usually been in the greatest perfection. I put myself under the direction of one Champeaux, a professor, who had acquired the character of the most skilful philosopher of his age, by negative excellencies only, by being the least ignorant. He received me with great demonstrations of kindness, but I was not so happy as to please him long : I was too knowing in the subjects he discoursed upon ; I often confuted his notions ; often in our disputations I pushed a good argument so home, that all his subtilty was not able to elude its force. It was impossible he should see himself surpassed by his scholar without resentment. It is sometimes dangerous to have too much merit.

Envy increased against me proportionably to my reputation. My enemies endeavoured to interrupt my progress, but their malice only provoked my courage ; and measuring my abilities by the jealousy I had raised, I thought I had no farther occasion for Champeaux's lectures, but rather that I was sufficiently qualified to read to others. I stood for a place which was vacant at Melun. My master used all his artifice to defeat my hopes, but in vain ; and on this occasion I triumphed over his cunning, as before I had done over his learning. My lectures were always crowded, and my beginnings so fortunate, that I entirely obscured the renown of my famous master. Flushed with these happy conquests, I removed to Corbeil, to attack the masters there, and

so establish my character of the ablest logician. The violence of travelling threw me into a dangerous distemper, and not being able to recover my strength, my physicians, who perhaps were in a league with Champeaux, advised me to remove to my native air. Thus I voluntarily banished myself for some years. I leave you to imagine whether my absence was not regretted by the better sort. At length I recovered my health, when I received news that my greatest adversary had taken the habit of a monk. You may think it was an act of penitence for having persecuted me: quite contrary; it was ambition: he resolved to raise himself to some church dignity, therefore fell into the beaten track, and took on him the garb of feigned austerity; for this is the easiest and shortest way to the highest ecclesiastical dignities. His wishes were successful, and he obtained a bishopric: yet did he not quit Parris, and the care of the schools. He went to his diocese to gather in his revenues, but returned and passed the rest of his time in reading lectures to those few pupils which followed him. After this I often engaged with him, and may reply to you as Ajax did to the Greeks:

“ If you demand the fortune of that day
When staked on this right hand your honours lay,
If I did not oblige the foe to yield,
Yet did I never basely quit the field.”

About this time my father Beranger, who to the age of sixty had lived very agreeably, retired from the world, and shut himself up in a cloister, where he offered up to heaven the languid remains of a life he could make no further use of. My mother, who was yet young, took the same resolution. She turned a religious, but did not entirely abandon the satisfactions of life. Her friends were continually at the grate; and the monastery, when one has an in-

clination to make it so, is exceeding charming and pleasant. I was present when my mother was professed. At my return I resolved to study divinity, and inquired for a director in that study. I was recommended to one Anselm, the very oracle of his time; but, to give you my own opinion, one more venerable for his age and wrinkles, than for his genius or learning. If you consulted him upon any difficulty, the sure consequence was to be much more uncertain in the point. They who only saw him admired him, but those who reasoned with him were extremely dissatisfied. He was a great master of words, and talked much, but meant nothing. His discourse was a fire, which, instead of enlightening, obscured every thing with its smoke; a tree beautified with variety of leaves and branches, but barren. I came to him with a desire to learn, but found him like the fig-tree in the gospel, or the old oak to which Lucan compares Pompey. I continued not long underneath his shadow. I took for my guides the primitive fathers, and boldly launched into the ocean of the Holy Scriptures. In a short time I made such a progress, that others chose me for their director. The number of my scholars was incredible, and the gratuities I received from them were answerable to the great reputation I had acquired. Now I found myself safe in the harbour, the storms were passed, and the rage of my enemies had spent itself without effect. Happy, had I known to make a right use of this calm! But when the mind is most easy, 'tis most exposed to love, and even security here is the most dangerous state.

And now, my friend, I am going to expose to you all my weaknesses. All men, I believe, are under a necessity of paying tribute, at some time or other, to love, and it is vain to strive to avoid it. I was a philosopher, yet this tyrant of the mind triumphed over all my wisdom; his darts were of greater force than all

my reasonings, and with a sweet constraint he led me whither he pleased. Heaven, amidst an abundance of blessings with which I was intoxicated, threw in a heavy affliction. I became a most signal example of its vengeance; and the more unhappy, because, having deprived me of the means of accomplishing my satisfaction, it left me to the fury of my criminal desires. I will tell you, my dear friend, the particulars of my story, and leave you to judge whether I deserved so severe a correction.

I had always an aversion for those light women, whom it is a reproach to pursue; I was ambitious in my choice and, wished to find some obstacles, that I might surmount them with the greater glory and pleasure.

There was in Paris a young creature (ah, Philintus!) formed in a prodigality of nature, to shew mankind a finished composition; dear Eloisa! the reputed niece of one Fulbert, a canon. Her wit and her beauty would have fired the dullest and most insensible heart; and her education was equally admirable. Eloisa was mistress of the most polite arts.—You may easily imagine that this did not a little help to captivate me. I saw her, I loved her; I resolved to endeavour to engage her affections. The thirst of glory cooled immediately in my heart, and all my passions were lost in this new one. I thought of nothing but Eloisa; every thing brought her image to my mind. I was pensive, restless, and my passion was so violent as to admit of no restraint. I was always vain and presumptive; I flattered myself already with the most bewitching hopes. My reputation had spread itself every where; and could a virtuous lady resist a man that had confounded all the learned of the age? I was young———could she show an insensibility to those vows which my heart never formed for any but herself? My person was advantageous enough, and by my dress no one would

have suspected me for a doctor; and dress, you know, is not a little engaging with women. Besides, I had wit enough to write a billet-doux, and hoped, if ever she permitted my absent self to entertain her, she would read with pleasure those breathings of my heart.

Filled with these notions, I thought of nothing but the means to speak to her, Lovers either find or make all things easy. By the offices of common friends, I gained the acquaintance of Fulbert. And, can you believe it, Philintus? he allowed me the privilege of his table, and an apartment in his house. I paid him indeed a considerable sum; for persons of his character do nothing without money. But what would I not have given? You, my dear friend know what love is; imagine, then, what a pleasure it must have been to a heart so inflamed as mine, to be always so near the dear object of desire? I would not have exchanged my happy condition for that of the greatest monarch upon earth. I saw Eloisa, I spoke to her—each action, each confused look, told her the trouble of my soul: and she, on the other side, gave me ground to hope for every thing from her generosity. Fulbert desired me to instruct her in philosophy: by this means I found opportunities of being in private with her, and yet I was sure of all men the most timorous in declaring my passion.

As I was with her one day alone, "Charming Eloisa," said I, blushing, "if you know yourself, you will not be surprised with that passion you have inspired me with. Uncommon as it is, I can express it but with the common terms—I love you, adorable Eloisa! Till now I thought philosophy made us masters of all our passions, and that it was a refuge from the storms in which weak mortals are tossed and shipwrecked; but you have destroyed my security, and broken this philosophic courage. I have despised riches; honour and its pageantries could never raise a weak thought in me; beauty alone

has fired my soul : happy if she who raised this passion, kindly receives the declaration : but if it is an offence——”——“ No,” replied Eloisa ; “ she must be very ignorant of your merit, who can be offended at your passion. But, for my own repose, I wish either that you had not made this declaration, or that I were at liberty not to suspect your sincerity.”——“ Ah ! divine Eloisa,” said I, flinging myself at her feet, “ I swear by yourself——” I was going on to convince her of the truth of my passion, but heard a noise, and it was Fulbert. There was no avoiding it, but I must do a violence to my desire, and change the discourse to some other subject. After this I found frequent opportunities to free Eloisa from those suspicions, which the general insincerity of men had raised in her ; and she too much desired what I said were truth, not to believe it. Thus there was a most happy understanding between us. The same house, the same love, united our persons and our desires. How many soft moments did we pass together ! We took all opportunities to express to each other our mutual affections, and were ingenious in contriving incidents which might give us plausible occasion of meeting. Pyramis and Thisbe’s discovery of the crack in the wall was but a slight representation of our love and its sagacity. In the dead of night, when Fulbert and his domestics were in a sound sleep, we improved the time proper to the sweet thefts of love : not contenting ourselves, like those unfortunate lovers, with giving insipid kisses to a wall, we made use of all the moments of our charming interviews. In the place where we met we had no lions to fear, and the study of philosophy served us for a blind. But I was so far from making any advances in the sciences, that I lost all my taste for them, and when I was obliged to go from the sight of my dear mistress, to my philosophical exercises, ’twas with the utmost

regret and melancholy. Love is incapable of being concealed, a word, a look, nay silence speaks it. My scholars discovered it first; they saw I had no longer that vivacity of thought to which all things were easy; I could now do nothing but write verses to sooth my passion: I quitted Aristotle and his dry maxims, to practise the precepts of the more ingenious Ovid. No day passed in which I did not compose amorous verses. Love was my inspiring Apollo. My songs were spread abroad, and gained me frequent applauses. Those who were in love, as I was, took a pride in learning them; and, by luckily applying my thoughts and verses, have obtained favours, which perhaps they could not otherwise have gained. This gave our amours such an eclat, that the loves of Eloisa and Abelard were the subject of all conversations.

The town-talk at last reached Fulbert's ears. It was with great difficulty he gave credit to what he heard; for he loved his niece, and was prejudiced in my favour: but upon closer examination, he began to be less incredulous. He surprised us in one of our most soft conversations. How fatal sometimes are the consequences of curiosity! The anger of Fulbert seemed too moderate on this occasion, and I feared in the end some more heavy revenge. It is impossible to express the grief and regret which filled my soul, when I was obliged to leave the canon's house and my dear Eloisa. But this separation of our persons the more firmly united our minds, and the desperate condition we were reduced to made us capable of attempting any thing.

My intrigues gave me but little shame, so lovingly did I esteem the occasion. Think what the gay young divinities said, when Vulcan caught Mars and the Goddess of Beauty in his net, and impute it all to me. Fulbert surprised me with Eloisa; and what man that had a soul in him would not have

borne any ignominy on the same conditions? The next day I provided myself with a private lodging near the loved house, being resolved not to abandon my prey. I continued some time without appearing publicly. Ah, how long did those few moments seem to me! When we fall from a state of happiness, with what impatience do we bear our misfortunes!

It being impossible that I could live without seeing Eloisa, I endeavoured to engage her servant, whose name was Agaton, in my interest. She was brown, well shaped, of a person superior to the ordinary rank; her features regular, and her eyes sparkling; fit to raise love in any man whose heart was not prepossessed by another passion. I met her alone, and intreated her to have pity on a distressed lover. She answered, she would undertake any thing to serve me, but there was a reward——At these words I opened my purse, and shewed the the shining metal which lays asleep guards, forces a way through rocks, and softens the hearts of the most obdurate fair. “You are mistaken,” said she, smiling and shaking her head; “you do not know me: could gold tempt me, a rich abbot takes his nightly station, and sings under my window; he offers to send me to his abbey, which he says, is situate in the most pleasant country in the world. A courtier offers me a considerable sum, and assures me I need have no apprehensions; for if our amours have consequences, he will marry me to his gentleman, and give him a handsome employment; to say nothing of a young officer, who patrols about here every night, and makes his attacks after all imaginable forms. It must be love only which could oblige him to follow me; for I have not, like your great ladies, any rings or jewels to tempt him: yet, during all his siege of love, his feather and his embroidered coat have not made any breach in my heart: I shall not quickly be brought to capitulate; I am

too faithful to my first conqueror." And then she looked earnestly on me. I answered, I did not understand her discourse. She replied, "For a man of sense and gallantry, you have a very slow apprehension. I am in love with you, Abelard. I know you adore Eloisa; I do not blame you: I desire only to enjoy the second place in your affections: I have a tender heart, as well as my mistress: you may without difficulty make returns to my passion; do not perplex yourself with unfashionable scruples: a prudent man ought to love several at the same time; if one should fail, he is not then left unprovided."

You cannot imagine, Philintus, how much I was surprised at these words: so entirely did I love Eloisa, that without reflecting whether Agaton spoke any thing reasonable or not, I immediately left her. When I had gone a little way from her, I looked back, and saw her biting her nails in the rage of disappointment, which made me fear some fatal consequences. She hastened to Fulbert, and told him the offer I had made her, but I suppose concealed the other part of the story. The canon never forgave this affront: I afterwards perceived he was more deeply concerned for his niece than I at first imagined. Let no lover hereafter follow my example: a woman rejected is an outrageous creature. Agaton was day and night at her window, on purpose to keep me at a distance from her mistress, and so gave her own gallants opportunity enough to display their several abilities.

I was infinitely perplexed what course to take; at last I applied myself to my Eloisa's singing-master. The shining metal, which had no effect on Agaton, charmed him; he was excellently qualified for conveying a billet with the greatest dexterity and secrecy. He delivered one of mine to Eloisa, who, according to my appointment, was ready at the end of a garden, the wall of which I scaled by a

ladder of ropes. I confess to you all my feelings, Philintus. How would my enemies, Champeaux and Anselm, have triumphed, had they seen the redoubted philosopher in such a wretched condition! Well—I met my soul's joy, my Eloisa: I shall not describe our transports, they were not long; for the first news Eloisa acquainted me with plunged me in a thousand distractions. A floating Delos was to be sought for, where she might be safely delivered of a burthen she began already to feel. Without losing much time in debating, I made her presently quit the canon's house, and at break of day depart for Britany, where she, like another goddess, gave the world another Apollo, which my sister took care of.

This carrying off Eloisa was sufficient revenge upon Fulbert; it filled him with the deepest concern, and had like to have deprived him of all the little share of wit which heaven had allowed him. His sorrow and lamentation gave the censorious an occasion of suspecting him for something more than the uncle of Eloisa.

In short, I began to pity his misfortunes, and to think this robbery which love had made me commit was a sort of treason. I endeavoured to appease his anger by a sincere confession of all that was past, and by hearty engagements to marry Eloisa secretly. He gave me his consent, and with many protestations and embraces confirmed our reconciliation. But what dependence can be made on the word of an ignorant devotee! He was only plotting a cruel revenge, as you will see by what follows.

I took a journey into Britany, in order to bring back my dear Eloisa, whom I now considered as my wife. When I had acquainted her with what had passed between the canon and me, I found she was of a contrary opinion to me. She urged all that was possible to divert me from marriage: that it was a

bond always fatal to a philosopher; that the cries of children and cares of a family were utterly inconsistent with the tranquility and application which the study of philosophy required. She quoted to me all that was written on the subject by Theophrastus, Cicero, and above all insisted on the unfortunate Socrates, who quitted life with joy, because by that means he left Xantippe. "Will it not be more agreeable to me," said she, "to see myself your mistress than your wife? And will not love have more power than marriage to keep our hearts firmly united? Pleasures tasted sparingly, and with difficulty, have always a higher relish, while every thing, by being easy and common, grows flat and insipid."

I was unmoved by all this reasoning. Eloisa prevailed upon my sister to engage me. Lucilla (for that was her name) taking me aside one day, said, "What do you intend, brother? Is it possible that Abelard should in earnest think of marrying Eloisa? She seems, indeed, to deserve a perpetual affection; beauty, youth, and learning, all that can make a person valuable, meet in her. You may adore all this if you please; but, not to flatter you, what is beauty but a flower, which may be blasted by the least fit of sickness? When those features, with which you have been so captivated, shall be sunk, and those graces lost, you will too late repent that you have entangled yourself in a chain, from which death only can free you. I shall see you reduced to the married man's only hope of survivorship. Do you think learning ought to make Eloisa more amiable? I know she is not one of those affected females who are continually oppressing you with very fine speeches, criticising books, and deciding upon the merit of authors. When such a one is in the fury of her discourse, husband, friends, servants, all fly before her. Eloisa has not this fault; yet 'tis

troublesome not to be at liberty to use the least improper expression before a wife, which you bear with pleasure from a mistress.

“ But you say you are sure of the affections of Eloisa : I believe it : she has given you no ordinary proofs. But can you be sure marriage will not be the tomb of her love ? The names of husband and master are always harsh, and Eloisa will not be the Phoenix you now think her. Will she not be a woman ?—Come, come, the head of a philosopher is less secure than those of other men.” My sister grew warm in the argument, and was going on to give me a hundred more reasons of this kind ; but I angrily interrupted her, telling her only, that she did not know Eloisa.

A few days after we departed together from Brittany, and came to Paris, where I completed my project. 'Twas my intent my marriage should be kept secret, and therefore Eloisa retired among the nuns of Argenteuil.

I now thought Fulbert's anger disarmed ; I lived in peace ; but, alas ! our marriage proved but a weak defence against his revenge. Observe, Philintus, to what a barbarity he pursued it ! He bribed my servants ; an assassin came into my chamber by night, with a razor in his hand, and found me in a deep sleep. I suffered the most shameful punishment that the revenge of an enemy could invent ; in short without losing my life, I lost my manhood. I was punished indeed in the offending part ; the desire was left me, but not the possibility of satisfying the passion. So cruel an action escaped not unpunished ; the villain suffered the same infliction : poor comfort for so irretrievable an evil ! I confess to you, shame more than any sincere penitence made me resolve to hide myself from the sight of men, yet could I not separate myself from my Eloisa. Jealousy took possession of my mind ; and at the very expence

of her happiness I decreed to disappoint all rivals. Before I put myself in a cloister, I obliged her to take the habit and retire into the nunnery of Argenteuil. I remember somebody would have opposed her making such a cruel sacrifice of herself; but she answered in the words of Cornelia, after the death of Pompey the Great;

—O conjux, ego te scelerata peremi.
 —Te fata extrema petente
 Vita digna fui? Moriar—&c.

O my lov'd lord! our fatal marriage draws
 On thee this doom, and I the guilty cause!
 Then whilst thou go'st th' extremes of fate to prove,
 I'll share that fate, and expiate thus my love.

Speaking these verses, she marched up to the altar, and took the veil with a constancy which I could not have expected in a woman who had so high a taste of pleasures which she might still enjoy. I blushed at my own weakness, and, without deliberating a moment longer, I buried myself in a cloister, resolved to vanquish a fruitless passion. I now reflected that God had chastised me thus grievously, that he might save me from that destruction in which I had like to have been swallowed up. In order to avoid idleness, the unhappy incendiary of those criminal flames which had ruined me in the world, I endeavoured in my retirement to put those talents to a good use which I had before so much abused. I gave the novices rules of divinity agreeable to the holy fathers and councils. In the mean while the enemies which my new fame had raised up, and especially Alberick and Lotulf, who, after the death of their masters, Champeaux and Anselm, assumed the sovereignty of learning, began to attack me. They loaded me with the falsest imputations, and, not-

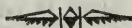
withstanding all my defence, I had the mortification to see my books condemned by a council, and burnt. This was a cutting sorrow; and believe me, Philintus, the former calamity I suffered by the cruelty of Fulbert was nothing in comparison to this.

The affront I had newly received, and the scandalous debaucheries of the monks, obliged me to banish myself, and retire near Nogent. I lived in a desert, where I flattered myself I should avoid fame, and be secure from the malice of my enemies, I was again deceived. The desire of being taught by me drew crowds of auditors even thither. Many left the towns and their houses, and came and lived in tents: for herbs, coarse fare, and hard lodging, they abandoned the delicacies of a plentiful table and easy life. I looked like the prophet in the wilderness attended by his disciples. My lectures were perfectly clear from all that had been condemned; and happy had it been if our solitude had been inaccessible to envy! With the considerable gratuities I received, I built a chapel, and dedicated it to the Holy Ghost, by the name of the Paraclete. The rage of my enemies now awakened again, and forced me to quit this retreat. This I did without much difficulty. But first the bishop of Troyes gave me leave to establish there a nunnery, which I did, and committed the care of it to my dear Eloisa. When I had settled her here, can you believe it, Philintus? I left her, without taking any leave. I did not wander long without any settled habitation; for the duke of Britany, informed of my misfortunes, named me to the Abbey of St. Guildas, where I now am, and where I suffer every day fresh persecutions.

I live in a barbarous country, the language of which I do not understand; I have no conversation but with the rudest people. My walks are on the inaccessible shore of a sea, which is perpetually stormy.

My monks are only known by their dissoluteness, and living without any rule or order. Could you see the abbey, Philintus, you would not call it one. The doors and walls are without any ornament, except the heads of wild boars and hinds' feet, which are nailed up against them, and the hides of frightful animals. The cells are hung with the skins of deer. The monks have not so much as a bell to wake them; the cocks and dogs supply that defect. In short, they pass their whole days in hunting;—would to heaven that was their greatest fault! or that their pleasures terminated there! I endeavour in vain to recall them to their duty; they all combine against me, and I only expose myself to continual vexations and dangers. I imagine I see every moment a naked sword hang over my head. Sometimes they surround me, and load me with abuses; sometimes they abandon me, and I am left alone to my own tormenting thoughts. I make it my endeavour to merit my sufferings, and to appease an angry God. Sometimes I grieve for the loss of the house of the Paraclete, and wish to see it again. Ah, Philintus! does not the love of Eloisa still burn in my heart? I have not yet triumphed over that unhappy passion. In the midst of my retirement I sigh, I weep, I pine, I speak the dear name Eloisa, and am pleased to hear the sound; I complain of the severity of heaven. But, oh! let us not deceive ourselves: I have not made a right use of grace. I am thoroughly wretched. I have not yet torn from my heart the deep roots which vice has planted in it. For if my conversion were sincere, how could I take a pleasure to relate my past follies? Could I not more easily comfort myself in my afflictions; could I not turn to my advantage those words of God himself—“If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you; if the world hate you, ye know that it hated me also? Come, Philintus, let us make a strong effort, turn

our misfortunes to our advantage, make them meritorious, or at least wipe out our offences; let us receive without murmuring what comes from the hand of God, and let us not oppose our will to his. Adieu. I give you advice which could I myself follow I should be happy.



LETTER II.

ELOISA TO ABELARD.

The foregoing Letter would probably not have produced any others, if it had been delivered to the person to whom it was directed ; but falling by accident into Eloisa's hands, who knew the character, she opened it, and read it ; and, by that means, her former passion being awakened, she immediately set herself to write to her husband, as follows :

* *To her lord, her father, her husband, her brother ; his servant, his child, his wife, his sister, and, to express all that is humble, respectful, and loving, to her Abelard, Eloisa writes this.*

A CONSOLATORY letter of yours to a friend happened some days since to fall into my hands ; my knowledge of the character, and my love of the hand, soon gave me the curiosity to open it. In justification of the liberty I took I flattered myself I might claim a sovereign privilege over every thing which came from you : nor was I scrupulous to break through the rules of good-breeding when it was to hear news of Abelard. But how dear did my curiosity cost me ! What disturbance did it occasion !

* Domino, suo, imo patri ; conjugi suo, imo fratri : Ancilla sua, imo filia ; ipsius uxor, imo soror ; Abælardo Heloissa, &c. Abel. Oper.

And how was I surprised to find the whole letter filled with a particular and melancholy account of our misfortunes! I met with my name an hundred times: I never saw it without fear; some heavy calamity always followed it: I saw yours, too, equally unhappy. These mournful but dear remembrances put my spirits into such a violent motion that I thought it was too much to offer comfort to a friend, for a few slight disgraces, by such extraordinary means as the representation of our sufferings and revolutions. What reflections did I not make! I began to consider the whole afresh, and perceived myself pressed with the same weight of grief as when we first began to be miserable. Though length of time ought to have closed up my wounds, yet the seeing them described by your hand was sufficient to make them all open and bleed afresh. Nothing can ever blot from my memory what you have suffered in defence of your writings. I cannot help thinking of the rancorous malice of Alberic and Lotulf. A cruel uncle, and an injured lover, will be always present to my aching sight. I shall never forget what enemies your learning, and what envy your glory, raised against you. I shall never forget your reputation, so justly acquired, torn to pieces, and blasted, by the inexorable cruelty of half-learned pretenders to science. Was not your treatise of divinity condemned to be burnt. Were you not threatened with perpetual imprisonment? In vain you urged in your defence, that your enemies imposed on you opinions quite different from your meaning: in vain you condemned those opinions; all was of no effect towards your justification; 'twas resolved that you should be a heretic. What did not those two false prophets* accuse you of, who declaimed so severely against you, before the council of Sens? What scandals were

vented on occasion of the name Paraclete being given to your chapel ! What a storm was raised against you by the treacherous monks, when you did them the honour to be called their brother ! This history of our numerous misfortunes, related in so true and moving a manner, made my heart bleed within me. My tears, which I could not restrain, have blotted half your letter ; I wish they had effaced the whole, and that I had returned it to you in that condition ; I should then have been satisfied with the little time I kept it ; but it was demanded of me too soon.

I must confess I was much easier in my mind before I read your letter. Sure all the misfortunes of lovers are conveyed to them through their eyes. Upon reading your letter I felt all mine renewed. I reproached myself for having been so long without venting my sorrows, when the rage of our unrelenting enemies still burns with the same fury. Since length of time, which disarms the strongest hatred, seems but to aggravate theirs ; since it is decreed that your virtue shall be prosecuted till it takes refuge in the grave, and even beyond that, your ashes, perhaps will not be suffered to rest in peace ; let me always meditate on your calamities, let me publish them through all the world, if possible, to shame an age that has not known how to value you. I will spare no one, since no one would interest himself to protect you, and your enemies are never weary of oppressing your innocence. Alas ! my memory is perpetually filled with bitter remembrances of past evils, and are there more to be feared still ! Shall my Abelard be never mentioned without tears ! Shall the dear name be never spoken but with sighs ! Observe, I beseech you, to what a wretched condition you have reduced me ! Sad, afflicted, without any possible comfort unless it proceed from you. Be not then unkind, nor deny, I beg you, that little relief which you only can give. Let me have a faith-

ful account of all that concerns you. I would know every thing, be it ever so unfortunate. Perhaps by mingling my sighs with yours I may make your sufferings less ; if that observation be true, that all sorrows divided are made lighter.

Tell me not, by way of excuse, you will spare our tears ; the tears of women shut up in a melancholy place, and devoted to penitence, are not to be spared. And if you wait for an opportunity to write pleasant and agreeable things to us, you will delay writing too long : prosperity seldom chuses the side of the virtuous, and Fortune is so blind that in a crowd, in which there is perhaps but one wise and brave man, it is not to be expected she should single him out. Write to me then immediately, and wait not for miracles ; they are too scarce, and we are too much accustomed to misfortunes to expect any happy turn. I shall always have this, if you please, and this will be always agreeable to me, that when I receive any letters from you, I shall know you still remember me. Seneca, (with those writings you made me acquainted) as much a Stoic as he was, seemed to be so very sensible of this kind of pleasure, that upon opening any letters from Lucilius, he imagined he felt the same delight as when they conversed together.

I have made it an observation since our absence, that we are much fonder of the pictures of those we love, when they are at a great distance, than when they are near to us. It seems to me, as if the farther they are removed the pictures grow the more in finished, and acquire a greater resemblance ; at least our imagination, which perpetually figures them to us by the desire we have of seeing them again, makes us think so. By a peculiar power love can make that seem life itself, which, as soon as the loved object returns, is nothing but a little canvas and dead colours. I have your picture in my room : I never

pass by it without stopping to look at it; and yet when you were present with me I scarce ever cast my eyes upon it. If a picture, which is but a mute representation of an object, can give such pleasure, what cannot letters inspire? They have souls, they can speak; they have in them all that force which expresses the transports of the heart; they have all the fire of our passions, they can raise them as much as if the persons themselves were present; they have all the softness and delicacy of speech, and sometimes a boldness of expression even beyond it.

We may write to each other: so innocent a pleasure is not forbidden us. Let us not lose, through negligence, the only happiness which is left us; and the only one, perhaps, which the malice of our enemies can never ravish from us. I shall read that you are my husband, and you shall see me address you as a wife. In spite of all your misfortunes, you may be what you please in your letters. Letters were first invented for comforting such solitary wretches as myself. Having lost the substantial pleasures of seeing and possessing you, I shall in some measure compensate this loss by the satisfaction I shall find in your writing. There I shall read your most secret thoughts; I shall carry them always about me, I shall kiss them every moment; if you can be capable of any jealousy, let it be for the fond caresses I shall bestow on your letters, and envy only the happiness of those rivals. That writing may be no trouble to you, write always to me carelessly, and without study: I had rather read the dictates of the heart than of the brain. I cannot live if you do not tell me you always love me; but that language ought to be so natural to you, that I believe you cannot speak otherwise to me without great violence to yourself. And since, by that melancholy relation to your friend, you have awakened all my sorrows, it is but reason-

able you should allay them by some marks of an inviolable love.

I do not, however, reproach you for the innocent artifice you made use of to comfort a person in affliction, by comparing his misfortune to another much greater. Charity is ingenious in finding out such pious artifices, and to be commended for using them. But do you owe nothing more to us than to that friend, be the friendship between you ever so intimate? We are called your sisters; we call ourselves your children; and if it were possible to think of any expressions which could signify a dearer relation, or a more affectionate regard and mutual obligation between us, we would use them: if we could be so ungrateful as not to speak our just acknowledgements to you, this church, these altars, these walls, would reproach our silence and speak for us. But without leaving it to that, it will be always a pleasure to me to say, that you only are the founder of this house; it is wholly your work. You, by inhabiting here, have given fame and sanction to a place known before only for robberies and murders. You have in the literal sense made the den of thieves a house of prayer. These cloisters owe nothing to public charities; our walls were not raised by the usury of publicans, nor their foundations laid in base extortion. The God whom we serve sees nothing but innocent riches, and harmless votaries, whom you have placed here. Whatever this young vineyard is, is owing all to you; and it is your part to employ your whole care to cultivate and improve it; this ought to be one of the principal affairs of your life. Though our holy renunciation, our vows, and our manner of life, seem to secure us from all temptations, though our walls and gates prohibit all approaches, yet it is the outside only, the bark of the tree, is covered from injuries; while the sap of original corruption may imperceptibly spread within, even to

the heart, and prove fatal to the most promising plantation, unless continual care be taken to cultivate and secure it. Virtue in us is grafted upon nature and the woman; the one is weak, and the other is always changeable. To plant the Lord's vine is a work of no little labour; and after it is planted it will require great application and diligence to manure it. The apostle of the Gentiles, as great a labourer as he was, says, he hath planted and Apollos hath watered, but it is God that gives the increase. Paul had planted the Gospel among the Corinthians, by his holy and earnest preaching; Apollos, a zealous disciple of that great master, continued to cultivate it by frequent exhortations; and the grace of God, which their constant prayers implored for that church, made the endeavours of both successful.

This ought to be an example for your conduct towards us. I know you are not slothful; yet your labours are not directed to us; your cares are wasted upon a set of men whose thoughts are only earthly, and you refuse to reach out your hand to support those who are weak and staggering, in their way to heaven, and who with all their endeavours can scarcely preserve themselves from falling. You fling the pearls of the Gospel before swine, when you speak to those who are filled with the good things of this world, and nourished with the fatness of the earth; and you neglect the innocent sheep, who, tender as they are, would yet follow you through deserts and mountains. Why are such pains thrown away upon the ungrateful, while not a thought is bestowed upon your children, whose souls would be filled with a sense of your goodness! But why should I entreat you in the name of your children! Is it possible I should fear obtaining any thing of you, when I ask it in my own name! And must I use any other prayers than my own to prevail upon you?

The St. Austins, Tertullians, and Jeromes, have wrote to the Eudoxas, Paulas, and Melanias; and can you read those names, though of saints, and not remember mine! Can it be criminal for you to imitate St. Jerome, and discourse with me concerning the Scripture; or Tertullian, and preach mortification; or St. Austin, and explain to me the nature of grace? Why should I only reap no advantage from your learning? When you write to me, you will write to your wife. Marriage has made such a correspondence lawful; and since you can, without giving the least scandal, satisfy me, why will you not? I am not only engaged by my vows, which might possibly be sometimes neglected, but I have a barbarous uncle, whose inhumanity is a security against any criminal desire which tenderness and the remembrance of our past enjoyments might inspire. There is nothing which can cause you any fear; you need not fly to conquer. You may see me, hear my sighs, and be a witness of all my sorrows, without incurring any danger, since you can only relieve me with tears and words. If I have put myself into a cloister with reason, to persuade me to continue in it with devotion. You have been the occasion of all my misfortunes; you, therefore, must be the instrument of all my comfort.

You cannot but remember (for what do not lovers remember!) with what pleasure I have past whole days in hearing you discourse. How when you were absent I shut myself from every one to write to you; how uneasy I was till my letter had come to your hands; what artful management it required to engage confidants: this detail, perhaps, surprises you, and you are in pain for what will follow. But I am no longer ashamed that my passion has had no bounds for you; for I have done more than all this; I have hated myself that I might love you; I came hither to ruin myself in a perpetual imprisonment,

that I might make you live quiet and easy. Nothing but virtue, joined to a love perfectly disengaged from the commerce of the senses, could have produced such effects. Vice never inspires any thing like this, it is too much enslaved to the body. When we love pleasures we love the living and not the dead. We leave off burning with desire for those who can no longer burn for us. This was my cruel uncle's notion; he measured my virtue by the frailty of my sex, and thought it was the man, and not the person, I loved. But he has been guilty to no purpose. I love you more than ever, and, to revenge myself of him, I will still love you with all the tenderness of my soul till the last moment of my life. If formerly my affection for you was not so pure, if in those days the mind and the body shared in the pleasure of loving you, I often told you, even then, that I was more pleased with possessing your heart than with any other happiness, and the man was the thing I least valued in you.

You cannot but be entirely persuaded of this, by the extreme unwillingness I shewed to marry you; though I knew that the name of wife was honourable in the world, and holy in religion, yet the name of your mistress had greater charms, because it was more free. The bonds of matrimony, however honourable, still bear with them a necessary engagement. And I was very unwilling to be necessitated to love always a man who, perhaps, would not always love me. I despised the name of wife, that I might live happy with that of mistress; and I find by your letter to your friend, you have not forgot that delicacy of passion in a woman who loved you always with the utmost tenderness; and yet wished to love you more. You have very justly observed in your letter, that I esteemed those public engagements insipid which form alliances only to be dissolved by death, and which put life and love under the same unhappy

necessity ; but you have not added how often I have made protestations that it was infinitely preferable to me to live with Abelard as his mistress, than with any other as empress of the world ; and that I was more happy in obeying you, than I should have been in lawfully captivating the lord of the universe. Riches and pomp are not the charms of love. True tenderness makes us separate the lover from all that is external to him, and, setting aside his quality, fortune, and employments, consider him singly by himself.

'Tis not love, but the desire of riches and honour, which makes women run into the embraces of an indolent husband. Ambition, not affection, forms such marriages. I believe indeed, they may be followed with some honours and advantages, but I can never think that this is the way to enjoy the pleasures of an affectionate union, nor to feel those secret and charming emotions of hearts that have long strove to be united. These martyrs of marriage pine always for larger fortunes, which they think they have lost. The wife sees husbands richer than her own, and the husband wives better portioned than his. Their interested vows occasion regret, and regret produces hatred. They soon part, or always desire it. This restless and tormenting passion punishes them for aiming at other advantages in love, than love itself.

If there is any thing which may properly be called happiness here below, I am persuaded, it is in the union of two persons who love each other with perfect liberty, who are united by a secret inclination, and satisfied with each other's merit. Their hearts are full, and leave no vacancy for any other passion ; they enjoy perpetual tranquillity, because they enjoy content.

If I could believe you as truly persuaded of my merit, as I am of yours, I might say, there has been a time when we were such a pair. Alas ! how was it

possible I should not be certain of your merit! If I could ever have doubted it, the universal esteem would have made me determine in your favour. What country, what city, has not desired your presence! Could you ever retire, but you drew the eyes and hearts of all after you? Did not every one rejoice in having seen you? Even women, breaking through the laws of decorum which custom had imposed upon them, shewed manifestly they felt something more for you than esteem. I have known some who have been profuse in their husbands, praises, who have yet envied my happiness, and given strong intimations they could have refused you nothing. But what could resist you! Your reputation, which so much soothed the vanity of our sex, your air, your manner! that life in your eyes which so admirably expressed the vivacity of your mind; your conversation, with that ease and elegance which gave every thing you said such an agreeable and insinuating turn; in short, every thing spoke for you. Very different from some mere scholars, who, with all their learning, have not the capacity to keep up an ordinary conversation; and with all their wit cannot win the affections of women, who have a much less share than themselves.

With what ease did you compose verses! and yet those ingenious trifles, which were but a recreation after your more serious studies, are still the entertainment and delight of persons of the best taste. The smallest song, nay the least sketch of any thing you made for me, had a thousand beauties capable of making it last as long as there are love or lovers in the world. Thus those songs will be sung in honour of other women, which you designed only for me; and those tender and natural expressions which spoke your love, will help others to explain their passion, with much more advantage than what they themselves are capable of.

What rivals did your gallantries of this kind occasion me? How many ladies laid claim to them! 'Twas a tribute that self-love paid to their beauty. How many have I seen with sighs declare their passion for you, when, after some common visit you had made them, they chanced to be complimented for the Sylvia of your poems! Others, in despair and envy, have reproached me, that I have no charms but what your wit bestowed on me, nor in any thing the advantage over them, but in being beloved by you. Can you believe me, if I tell you that, notwithstanding the vanity of my sex, I thought myself peculiarly happy in having a lover to whom I was obliged for my charms, and took a secret pleasure in being admired by a man who, when he pleased, could raise his mistress to the character of a goddess! Pleased with your glory only, I read with delight all those praises you offered me, and without reflecting how little I deserved, I believed myself such as you described me, that I might be more certain I pleased you.

But, oh, where is that happy time fled! I now lament my lover, and of all my joys there remains nothing, but the painful remembrance that they are past. Now learn, all you my rivals who once viewed my happiness with such jealous eyes, that he you once envied me can never more be yours or mine. I loved him; my love was his crime, and the cause of his punishment. My beauty once charmed him. Pleased with each other, we passed our brightest days in tranquillity and happiness. If that was a crime, it is a crime I am yet fond of, and I have no other regret than that against my will I must necessarily be innocent. But what do I say? My misfortune was to have cruel relations, whose malice disturbed the calm we enjoyed. Had they been capable of the returns of reason, I had now been happy in the enjoyment of my dear husband. Oh, how cruel

were they, when their blind fury urged a villain to surprise you in your sleep! Where was I! where was your Eloisa then? What joy should I have had in defending my lover! I would have guarded you from violence, though at the expence of my life; my cries and shrieks alone would have stopped the hand———Oh, whither does the excess of passion hurry me! Here love is shocked, and modesty joined with despair, deprived me of words. 'Tis eloquence to be silent where no expression can reach the greatness of the misfortune.

But tell me whence proceeds your neglect of me since my being professed? You know nothing moved me to it but your disgrace; nor did I give any consent but yours. Let me hear what is the occasion of your coldness, or give me leave to tell you now my opinion. Was it not the sole view of pleasure which engaged you to me? And has not my tenderness, by leaving you nothing to wish for, extinguished your desires?—Wretched Eloisa! you could please when you wished to avoid it! You merited incense, when you could remove to a distance the hand that offered it! But since your heart has been softened, and has yielded, since you have devoted and sacrificed yourself, you are deserted and forgotten. I am convinced by sad experience, that it is natural to avoid those to whom we have been too much obliged; and that uncommon generosity produces neglect rather than acknowledgement. My heart surrendered too soon to gain the esteem of the conqueror; you took it without difficulty, and gave it up as easily. But ungrateful as you are, I will never consent to it. And though in this place I ought not to retain a wish of my own, yet I have ever secretly preserved the desire of being beloved by you. When I pronounced my sad vow, I then had about me your last letters, in which you protested you would be wholly mine, and would never live but to love me. 'Tis to you, therefore,

I have offered myself; you had my heart, and I had yours; do not demand any thing back; you must bear with my passion as a thing which of right belongs to you, and from which you can no ways be disengaged.

Alas, what folly is it to talk at this rate! I see nothing here but marks of the Deity, and I speak of nothing but man! You have been the cruel occasion of this, by your conduct: unfaithful man! Ought you at once to break off loving me? Why did you not deceive me for awhile, rather than immediately abandon me? If you had given me at least but some faint signs even of a dying passion, I myself had favoured the deception. But in vain would I flatter myself that you could be constant; you have left me no colour of making your excuse. I am earnestly desirous to see you, but if that be impossible I will content myself with a few lines from your hand. Is it so hard for one who loves, to write! I ask for none of your letters filled with learning, and wit for your reputation; all I desire is such letters as the heart dictates, and which the hand can scarce write fast enough. How did I deceive myself with the hopes that you would be wholly mine, when I took the veil, and engaged myself to live for ever under your laws! For in being professed, I vowed no more than to be yours only, and I obliged myself voluntarily to a confinement in which you desired to place me. Death only, then, can make me leave the place where you have fixed me; and then, too, my ashes shall rest here, and wait for yours, in order to shew my obedience and devotedness to you, to the latest moment possible.

Why should I conceal from you the secret of my call! you know it was neither zeal nor devotion which led me to the cloister. Your conscience is too faithful a witness to permit you to disown it. Yet here I am, and here I will remain; to this place

an unfortunate love, and my cruel relations, have condemned me. But if you do not continue your concern for me, if I lose your affection, what have I gained by my imprisonment; what recompence can I hope for? The unhappy consequences of a criminal conduct, and your disgraces, have put on me this habit of chastity, and not the sincere desire of being truly penitent. Thus I strive and labour in vain. Among those who are wedded to God, I serve a man; among the heroic supporters of the cross I am a poor slave to a human passion; at the head of a religious community, I am devoted to Abelard only. What a prodigy am I! Enlighten me, O Lord!—Does thy grace, or my own despair, draw these words from me, I am sensible I am, in the temple of Chastity, covered only with the ashes of that fire which hath consumed us. I am here, I confess, a sinner, but one who, far from weeping for her sins, weeps only for her lover; far from abhorring her crimes, endeavours only to add to them; and who, with a weakness unbecoming the state I am in, please myself continually with the remembrance of past actions, when it is impossible to renew them.

Good God, what is all this! I reproach myself for my own faults, I accuse you for yours, and to what purpose? Veiled as I am, behold in what a disorder you have plunged me! How difficult is it to fight always for duty against inclination! I know what obligations this veil lays on me, but I feel more strongly what power a long habitual passion has over my heart. I am conquered by my inclination. My love troubles my mind, and disorders my will. Sometimes I am swayed by the sentiments of piety which arise in me, and the next moment I yield up my imagination to all that is amorous and tender. I tell you to-day what I would not have said to you yesterday. I had resolved to love you no more! I considered I had made a vow, taken the veil, and am as it were

dead and buried; yet there rises unexpected from the bottom of my heart a passion which triumphs over all these notions, and darkens all my reason and devotion. You reign in such inward retreats of my soul, that I know not where to attack you. When I endeavour to break those chains by which I am bound to you I only deceive myself, and all the efforts I am able to make serve but to bind them the faster. Oh, for pity's sake, help a wretch to renounce her desires, herself, and, if it be possible, even, to renounce you! If you are a lover, a father, help a mistress, comfort a child! These tender names, cannot they move you? Yield either to pity or love! If you gratify my request, I shall continue a religious, without longer profaning my calling. I am ready to humble myself with you to the wonderful providence of God, who does all things for our sanctification, who by his grace purifies all that is vicious and corrupt in the principle, and by the inconceivable riches of his mercy draws us to himself against our wishes, and by degrees opens our eyes to discern the greatness of his bounty, which at first we would not understand.

I thought to end my letter here. But now I am complaining against you, I must unload my heart and tell you all its jealousies and reproaches. Indeed I thought it something hard, that when we had both engaged to consecrate ourselves to heaven, you should insist on my doing it first. Does Abelard then, said I, suspect he shall see renewed in me the example of Lot's wife, who could not forbear looking back when she left Sodom! If my youth and sex might give occasion of fear that I should return to the world, could not my behaviour, my fidelity, and this heart, which you ought to know, could not these banish such ungenerous apprehensions? This distrustful foresight touched me sensibly. I said to myself, there was a time when he could rely upon

my bare word, and does he now want vows to secure himself of me! What occasion have I given him, in the whole course of my life, to admit the least suspicion! I could meet him at all his assignations, and would I decline following him to the seats of holiness! I who have not refused to be a victim of pleasure to gratify him, can he think I would refuse to be a sacrifice of honour to obey him! Has vice such charms to well-born souls! and when we have once drank of the cup of sinners, is it with such difficulty that we take the chalice of Saints! or did you believe yourself a greater master to teach vice and virtue; or did you think it was more easy to persuade me to the first than [the latter! No; this suspicion would be injurious to both. Virtue is too amiable not to be embraced, when you reveal her charms; and Vice too hideous not to be avoided, when you shew her deformities. Nay, when you please, any thing seems lovely to me, and nothing is frightful or difficult when you are by. I am only weak when I am alone and unsupported by you, and therefore it depends on you alone that I may be such as you desire. I wish to heaven you had not such power over me! If you had any occasion to fear, you would be less negligent. But what is there for you to fear? I have done too much, and now have nothing more to do but to triumph over your ingratitude. When we lived happy together, you might have made it a doubt whether pleasure or affection united me more to you; but the place from whence I write to you must now have entirely taken away that doubt. Even here I love you as much as ever I did in the world. If I had loved pleasures, could I not yet have found means to have gratified myself? I was not above twenty-two years old, and there were other men left, though I was deprived of Abelard; and yet, did I not bury myself alive in a nunnery, and triumph over love, at an age capable of

enjoying it in its full latitude? 'Tis to you I sacrifice these remains of a transitory beauty, these widowed nights and tedious days, which I pass without seeing you; and since you cannot possess them, I take them from you to offer them to heaven, and to make, alas! but a secondary obligation of my heart, my days, and my life!

I am sensible I have dwelt too long on this head; I ought to speak less to you of your misfortunes, and of my own sufferings, for love of you. We tarnish the lustre of our most beautiful actions, when we applaud them ourselves. This is true, and yet there is a time when we may with decency commend ourselves: when we have to do with those whom base ingratitude has stupified, we cannot too much praise our own good actions. Now if you were of this sort of men, this would be a home reflection on you. Irresolute as I am, I still love you, and yet I must hope for nothing. I have renounced life, and stripped myself of every thing, but I find I neither have nor can renounce my Abelard; though I have lost my lover I still preserve my love. O, vows; O, convent! I have not lost my humanity under your inexorable discipline! You have not made me marble by changing my habit; my heart is not hardened by my imprisonment; I am still sensible to what has touched me, though, alas! I ought not to be so. Without offending your commands, permit a lover to exhort me to live in obedience to your rigorous rules. Your yoke will be lighter, if that hand support me under it; your exercises will be amiable, if he shews me their advantage. Retirement, solitude! you will not appear terrible, if I may but still know I have any place in his memory. A heart which has been so sensibly affected as mine, cannot soon be indifferent. We fluctuate long between love and hatred before we can arrive at a happy tranquillity, and we always flatter ourselves

with some distant hope that we shall not be quite forgotten.

Yes, Abelard, I conjure you by the chains I bear here, to ease the weight of them, and make them as agreeable as I wish they were to me. Teach me the maxims of divine love. Since you have forsaken me, I glory in being wedded to heaven. My heart adores that title, and disdains any other; tell me how this divine love is nourished, how it operates and purifies itself. When we were tossed in the ocean of the world, we could hear of nothing but your verses, which published every where our joys and our pleasures. Now we are in the haven of grace, is it not fit you should discourse to me of this happiness, and teach me every thing which might improve and heighten it? Shew me the same complaisance in my present condition as you did when we were in the world. Without changing the ardour of our affections let us change their object; let us leave our songs, and sing hymns; let us lift up our hearts to God, and have no transports but for his glory.

I expect this from you as a thing you cannot refuse me. God has a peculiar right over the hearts of great men, which he has created. When he pleases to touch them he ravishes them, and lets them not speak or breathe but for his glory: 'till that moment of grace arrives, O, think of me!—do not forget me!—remember my love, my fidelity, my constancy! Love me as your mistress, cherish me as your child, your sister, your wife! Consider that I still love you, and yet strive to avoid loving you!—What a word, what a design is this! I shake with horror, and my heart revolts against what I say! I shall blot all my paper with tears—I end my long letter, wishing you, if you can desire it, (would to heaven I could!) for ever adieu!

LETTER II.

ABELARD TO ELOISA.

That the reader may make a right judgment on the following letter, it is proper he should be informed of the condition Abelard was in when he wrote it. The duke of Britany, whose subject he was born, jealous of the glory of France, which then engrossed all the most famous scholars of Europe, and being besides acquainted with the persecution Abelard had suffered from his enemies, had nominated him to the abbey of St. Guildas, and, by this benefaction and mark of his esteem, engaged him to pass the rest of his days in his dominions. He received this favour with great joy, imagining, that by leaving France, he should lose his passion, and gain a new turn of mind upon entering into his new dignity. The abbey of St. Guildas is seated upon a rock, which the sea beats with its waves. Abelard, who had laid on himself the necessity of vanquishing a passion which absence had in a great measure weakened, endeavoured in this solitude to extinguish the remains of it by his tears. But upon his receiving the foregoing letter he could not resist so powerful an attack, but proves as weak and as much to be pitied as Eloisa. It is not then a master or director that speaks to her, but a man who had loved her, and loves her still; and under this character we are to consider Abelard when he wrote the following letter. If he seems by some passages in it to have begun to feel the motions of Divine Grace, they appear as yet to be only by starts, and without any uniformity.

COULD I have imagined that a letter not written to yourself could have fallen into your hands, I had been more cautious not to have inserted any thing in it which might awaken the memory of our past misfortunes. I described with boldness the series of my disgrace to a friend, in order to make him less sensible of the loss he had sustained. If by this well-meaning artifice I have disturbed you, I purpose here to dry up those tears which the sad description occasioned you to shed: I intend to mix my grief with yours, and pour out my heart before you; in short, to lay open before your eyes all my trouble, and the secret of my soul, which my vanity has hitherto made me conceal from the rest of the world, and which you now force from me, in spite of my resolutions to the contrary.

It is true, that in a sense of the afflictions which had befallen us, and observing that no change of our condition was to be expected; that those prosperous days which had seduced us were now past, and there remained nothing but to erase out of our minds, by painful endeavours, all marks and remembrance of them, I had wished to find in philosophy and religion a remedy for my disgrace, I searched out an asylum to secure me from love. I was come to the sad experiment of making vows to harden my heart. But what have I gained by this? If my passion has been put under a restraint, my ideas yet remain. I promise myself that I will forget you, and yet cannot think of it without loving you; and am pleased with that thought. My love is not at all weakened by those reflections I made in order to free myself. The silence I am surrounded with makes me more sensible to its impressions; and while I am unemployed with any other things, this makes itself the business of my whole vacation; till, after a multitude of useless endeavours, I begin to persuade myself that 'tis a superfluous trouble to strive to free myself, and that

it is wisdom sufficient if I can conceal from every one but you my confusion and weakness.

I remove to a distance from your person, with an intention of avoiding you as an enemy, and yet I incessantly seek for you in my mind: I recal your image in my memory; and in such different disquietudes I betray and contradict myself. I hate you; I love you: Shame presses me on all sides; I am at this moment afraid lest I should seem more indifferent than you, and yet I am ashamed to discover my trouble. How weak are we in ourselves, if we do not support ourselves on the cross of Christ! Shall we have so little courage, and shall that uncertainty your heart labours with, of serving two masters, affect mine too! You see the confusion I am in, what I blame myself for, and what I suffer. Religion commands me to pursue virtue, since I have nothing to hope for from love. But love still preserves its dominion in my fancy, and entertains itself with past pleasures. Memory supplies the place of a mistress. Piety and duty are not always the fruits of retirement; even in deserts, where the dew of heaven falls not on us, we love what we ought no longer to love. The passions, stirred up by solitude, fill those regions of death and silence; and it is very seldom that what ought to be is truly followed there, and that God only is loved and served. Had I always had such notions as these, I had instructed you better. You call me your master: 'tis true you were entrusted to my care. I saw you, I was earnest to teach you vain sciences; it cost you your innocence, and me my liberty. Your uncle, who was fond of you, became therefore my enemy, and revenged himself on me. If now, having lost the power of satisfying my passion, I had lost too that of loving you, I should have some consolation. My enemies would have given me that tranquillity which Origen purchased by a crime. How miserable am I! My

misfortune does not loose my chains, my passion grows furious by impotence, and that desire I still have for you, amidst all my disgraces, makes me more unhappy than the misfortune itself. I find myself much more guilty in my thoughts of you, even amidst my tears, than in possessing yourself when I was in full liberty. I continually think of you, I continually call to mind that day when you bestowed on me the first marks of your tenderness. In this condition, O Lord! if I run to prostrate myself before thy altars, if I beseech thee to pity me, why does not the pure flame of thy spirit consume the sacrifice that is offered to thee? Cannot this habit of penitence which I wear, interest heaven to treat me more favourably! But that is still inexorable, because my passion still lives in me: the fire is only covered over with deceitful ashes, and cannot be extinguished but by extraordinary grace. We deceive men, but nothing is hid from God.

You tell me, that 'tis for me you live under that veil which covers you. Why do you prophane your vocation with such words? Why provoke a jealous God by a blasphemy? I hoped, after our separation, you would have changed your sentiments; I hoped too, that God would have delivered me from the tumult of my senses and that contrariety which reigns in my heart. We commonly die to the affections of those whom we see no more, and they to ours. Absence is the tomb of love. But to me absence is an unquiet remembrance of what I once loved, which continually torments me. I flattered myself, that when I should see you no more, you would only rest in my memory, without giving any trouble to my mind; that Britany and the sea would inspire other thoughts; that my fasts and studies would by degrees erase you out of my heart: but in spite of severe fasts and redoubled studies, in spite of the distance of three hundred miles which

separates us, your image, such as you describe yourself in your veil, appears to me, and confounds all my resolutions.

What means have I not used! I have armed my own hands against myself; I have exhausted my strength in constant exercises; I comment upon St. Paul; I dispute with Aristotle: in short, I do all I used to do before I loved you, but all in vain; nothing can be successful that opposes you. Oh! do not add to my miseries by your constancy; forget, if you can, your favours, and that right which they claim over me; permit me to be indifferent. I envy their happiness who have never loved; how quiet and easy are they! But the tide of pleasures has always a reflux of bitterness: I am but too much convinced now of this; but though I am no longer deceived by love, I am not cured: while my reason condemns it, my heart declares for it. I am deplorable, that I have not the ability to free myself from a passion which so many circumstances, this place, my person, and my disgraces, tend to destroy. I yield, without considering that a resistance would wipe out my past offences, and would procure me, in their stead, merit and repose. Why should you use eloquence to reproach me for my flight and for my silence? Spare the recital of our assignations, and your constant exactness to them; without calling up such disturbing thoughts, I have enough to suffer.— What great advantages would philosophy give us over other men, if by studying it we could learn to govern our passions! But how humbled ought we to be when we cannot master them! What efforts, what relapses, what agitations do we undergo! And how long are we tost in this confusion, unable to exert our reason, to possess our souls, or to rule our affections!

What a troublesome employment is love! and how valuable is virtue, even upon consideration of our

own ease! Recollect your extravagances of passion, guess at my distractions; number up our cares, if possible, our griefs, and our inquietudes; throw these things out of the account, and let love have all its remaining softness and pleasure. How little is that! And yet for such shadows of enjoyments which at first appeared to us, are we so weak our whole lives, that we cannot now help writing to each other, covered as we are with sackcloth and ashes. How much happier should we be, if by our humiliation and tears we could make our repentance sure! The love of pleasure is not eradicated out of the soul, but by extraordinary efforts; it has so powerful a party in our breasts, that we find it difficult to condemn it ourselves. What abhorrence can I be said to have of my sins, if the objects of them are always amiable to me! How can I separate from the person I love, the passion I must detest? Will the tears I shed be sufficient to render it odious to me! I know not how it happens, there is always a pleasure in weeping for a beloved object. 'Tis difficult in our sorrow to distinguish penitence from love. The memory of the crime, and the memory of the object which has charmed us, are too nearly related to be immediately separated; and the love of God, in its beginning, does not wholly annihilate the love of the creature.

But what excuses could I not find in you, if the crime were excusable! Unprofitable honour, troublesome riches, could never tempt me; but those charms, that beauty, that air, which I yet behold at this instant, have occasioned my fall. Your looks were the beginning of my guilt; your eyes, your discourse, pierced my heart; and in spite of that ambition and glory which filled it, and offered to make a defence, love soon made itself master. God, in order to punish me, forsook me. His providence permitted those consequences which have since happened. You

are no longer of the world; you have renounced it: I am a religious, devoted to solitude; shall we make no advantage of our condition? Would you destroy my piety in its infant state? Would you have me forsake the convent into which I am but newly entered? Must I renounce my vows? I have made them in the presence of God: whither shall I fly from his wrath, if I violate them? Suffer me to seek for ease in my duty: how difficult is it to procure that! I pass whole days and nights alone in this cloister, without closing my eyes. My love burns fiercer amidst the happy indifference of those who surround me, and my heart is at once pierced with your sorrows and its own. Oh what a loss have I sustained, when I consider your constancy! What pleasures have I missed enjoying! I ought not to confess this weakness to you; I am sensible I commit a fault; if I could have shewed more firmness of mind, I should perhaps have provoked your resentment against me, and your anger might work that effect in you which your virtue could not. If in the world I published my weakness by verses and love-songs, ought not the dark cells of this house to conceal that weakness, at least under an appearance of piety? Alas! I am still the same! Or if I avoid the evil, I cannot do the good; and yet I ought to do both, in order to make this manner of living profitable. But how difficult is this in the trouble which surrounds me! Duty, reason and decency, which upon other occasions have some power over me, are here entirely useless. The Gospel is a language I do not understand when it opposes my passion. The oaths which I have taken before the holy altar are feeble helps when opposed to you. Amidst so many voices which call me to my duty, I hear and obey nothing but the secret dictates of a desperate passion. Void of all relish for virtue, any concern for my condition, or any application to my studies, I am continually pre-

sent ; by my imagination, where I ought not to be, and I find I have no power, when I would at any time correct it. I feel a perpetual strife between my inclination and my duty. I find myself entirely a distracted lover ; unquiet in the midst of silence, and restless in this abode of peace, and repose. How shameful is my condition !

Consider me no more I entreat you, as a founder, or any great personage ; your encomiums do but ill agree with such multiplied weaknesses. I am a miserable sinner, prostrate before my Judge, and with my face pressed to the earth, I mix my tears and sighs in the dust, when the beams of grace and reason enlighten me. Come, see me in this posture, and solicit me to love you ! Come, if you think fit, and in your holy habit thrust yourself between God and me, and be a wall of separation. Come, and force from me those sighs, thoughts, and vows, which I owe to him only. Assist the evil spirits, and be the instrument of their malice. What cannot you induce a heart to, whose weakness you so perfectly know ! But rather withdraw yourself, and contribute to my salvation. Suffer me to avoid destruction, I entreat you, by our former tenderest affection, and by our common misfortunes. It will always be the highest love to shew none : I here release you of all your oaths and engagements. Be God's wholly, to whom you are appropriated ; I will never oppose so pious a design. How happy shall I be if I thus lose you ! then shall I be indeed a religious and you a perfect example of an abbess.

Make yourself amends by so glorious a choice ; make your virtue a spectacle worthy men and angels : be humble among your children, assiduous in your choir, exact in your discipline, diligent in your reading ; make even your recreations useful. Have you purchased your vocation at so slight a rate, as that you should not turn it to the

best advantage? Since you have permitted yourself to be abused by false doctrine, and criminal instructions, resist not those good counsels which grace and religion inspire me with. I must confess to you, I have thought myself hitherto an abler master to instil vice than to excite virtue. My false eloquence has only set off false good. My heart, drunk with voluptuousness, could only suggest terms proper and moving to recommend that. The cup of sinners overflows with so enchanting a sweetness, and we are naturally so much inclined to taste it, that it needs only be offered to us. On the other hand, the chalice of saints is filled with a bitter draught, and nature starts from it. And yet you reproach me with cowardice for giving it you first; I willingly submit to these accusations. I cannot enough admire the readiness you shewed to take the religious habit: bear, therefore, with courage the cross which you have taken up so resolutely. Drink of the chalice of saints, even to the bottom, without turning your eyes with uncertainty upon me. Let me remove far from you, and obey the apostle who hath said, 'Fly.'

You intreat me to return, under a pretence of devotion. Your earnestness in this point creates a suspicion in me, and makes me doubtful how to answer you. Should I commit an error here, my words would blush, if I may say so, after the history of my misfortunes. The church is jealous of its glory and commands that her children should be induced to the practice of virtue by virtuous means. When we have approached God after an unblamable manner, we may then with boldness invite others to him. But to forget Eloisa, to see her no more, is what heaven demands of Abelard; and to expect nothing from Abelard, to lose him, even in idea, is what heaven enjoins Eloisa. To forget in the case of love, is the most necessary penitence, and the most dif-

ficult. It is easy to recount our faults ; how many, through indiscretion, have made themselves a second pleasure of this, instead of confessing them with humility. The only way to return to God is, by neglecting the creature which we have adored, and adoring God, whom we have neglected. This may appear harsh, but it must be done if we would be saved.

To make it more easy, observe why I pressed you to your vow before I took mine ; and pardon my sincerity, and the design I have of meriting your neglect and hatred, if I conceal nothing from you of the particulars you inquire after. When I saw myself so oppressed with my misfortune, my impotency made me jealous, and I considered all men as my rivals. Love has more of distrust than assurance. I was apprehensive of abundance of things, because I saw I had abundance of defects ; and being tormented with fear from my own example, I imagined your heart, which had been so much accustomed to love, would not be long without entering into a new engagement. Jealousy can easily believe the most dreadful consequences, I was desirous to put myself out of a possibility of doubting you. I was very urgent to persuade you that decency required you should withdraw from the envious eyes of the world ; that modesty, and our friendship, demanded it ; nay, that your own safety obliged you to it ; and that after such a revenge taken upon me, you could expect to be secure no where but in a convent.

I will do you justice—you were very easily persuaded to it. My jealousy secretly triumphed over your innocent compliance ; and yet, triumphant as I was, I yielded you up to God with an unwilling heart. I still kept my gift as much as was possible, and only parted with it that I might effectually put it out of the power of men, I did not persuade you to

religion out of any regard to your happiness, but condemned you to it, like an enemy who destroys what he cannot carry off. And yet you heard my discourses with kindness; you sometimes interrupted me with tears, and pressed me to acquaint you which of the convents was most in my esteem. What a comfort did I feel in seeing you shut up! I was now at ease, and took a satisfaction in considering that you did not continue long in the world after my disgrace, and that you would return into it no more.

But still this was doubtful; I imagined women were incapable of maintaining any constant resolutions, unless they were forced by the necessity of fixed vows. I wanted those vows, and heaven itself for your security, that I might no longer distrust you.—Ye holy mansions, ye impenetrable retreats, from what numberless apprehensions have you freed me! Religion and piety keep a strict guard round your grates and high walls. What a haven of rest is this to a jealous mind! And with what impatience did I endeavour it! I went every day trembling to exhort you to this sacrifice; I admired, without daring to mention it then, a brightness in your beauty which I had never observed before. Whether it was the bloom of a rising virtue, or an anticipation of that great loss I was going to suffer, I was not curious in examining the cause, but only hastened your being professed. I engaged your prioress in my guilt by a criminal bribe, with which I purchased the right of burying you. The professed of the house were alike bribed, and concealed from you, by my directions, all their scruples and disgusts. I omitted nothing, either little or great. And if you had escaped all my snares, I myself would not have retired: I was resolved to follow you every where. This shadow of myself would always have pursued your steps, and continually occasioned either your confusion or fear,

which would have been a sensible gratification to me.

But, thanks to Heaven, you resolved to make a vow ; I accompanied you with terror to the foot of the altar ; and while you stretched out your hand to touch the sacred cloth, I heard you pronounce distinctly those fatal words which for ever separated you from all men. Till then your beauty and youth seemed to oppose my design, and to threaten your return into the world. Might not a small temptation have changed you ! Is it possible to renounce one's self entirely at the age of two and twenty ! At an age which claims the most absolute liberty, could you think the world no longer worthy of your regard ! How much did I wrong you, and what weakness did I impute to you ! You were in my imagination nothing but lightness and inconstancy. Might not a young woman, at the noise of the flames, and of the fall of Sodom, look back, and pity some one person ! I took notice of your eyes, your motion, your air ; I trembled at every thing. You may call such a self-interested conduct treachery, perfidiousness, murder. A love which was so like to hatred ought to provoke the utmost contempt and anger.

It is fit you should know that the very moment when I was convinced of your being entirely devoted to me, when I saw you were infinitely worthy of all my love and acknowledgment, I imagined I could love you no more ; I thought it time to leave off giving you any marks of affection, and I considered that by your holy espousals you were now the peculiar care of heaven, even in the quality of a wife. My jealousy seemed to be extinguished. When God only is our rival, we have nothing to fear ; and being in greater tranquillity than ever before, I dared even to offer up prayers, and beseech him to take you away from my eyes ; but it was not a time to make rash prayers, and my faith was too imperfect to let them be heard.

He who sees the depths and secrets of all men's hearts, saw mine did not agree with my words. Necessity and despair were the springs of this proceeding. Thus I inadvertently offered an insult to heaven, rather than a sacrifice. God rejected my offering and my prayer, and continued my punishment, by suffering me to continue my love. Thus, under the guilt of your vows, and of the passion which preceded them, I must be tormented all the days of my life.

If God spoke to your heart, as to that of a religious whose innocence had first engaged him to heap on it a thousand favours, I should have matter of comfort; but to see both of us victims of a criminal love; to see this love insult us, and invest itself with our very habits, as with spoils it has taken from our devotion, fills me with horror and trembling. Is this a state of reprobation? or are these the consequences of a long drunkenness in profane love? We cannot say love is a drunkenness and a poison, till we are illuminated by grace; in the mean time it is an evil which we doat on. When we are under such a mistake, the knowledge of our misery is the first step towards amendment. Who does not know that 'tis for the glory of God, to find no other foundation in man for his mercy, than man's very weakness? When he has shewed us this weakness, and we bewail it, he is ready to put forth his omnipotence to assist us. Let us say, for our comfort, that what we suffer is one of those long and terrible temptations which have sometimes disturbed the vocations of the most holy.

God can afford his presence to men, in order to soften their calamities, whenever he shall think fit. It was his pleasure, when you took the veil, to draw you to him by his grace. I saw your eyes, when you spoke your last farewell, fixed upon the cross. It was above six months before you wrote me a letter, nor during all that time did I receive any message from

you. I admired this silence, which I durst not blame, and could not imitate: I wrote to you; you returned me no answer: your heart was then shut: but this garden of the spouse is now opened, he is withdrawn from it, and has left you alone: by removing from you, he has made trial of you; call him back, and strive to regain him. We must have the assistance of God, that we may break our chains; we have engaged too deeply in love, to free ourselves. Our follies have penetrated even into the most sacred places. Our amours have been matter of scandal to a whole kingdom. They are read and admired; love, which produced them, has caused them to be described: we shall be a consolation for the failings of youth hereafter. Those who offend after us will think themselves less guilty. We are criminals whose repentance is late, O may it be sincere! Let us repair, as far as is possible, the evils we have done; and let France, which has been the witness of our crimes, be astonished at our penitence. Let us confound all who would imitate our guilt; let us take the part of God against ourselves, and by so doing prevent his judgment. Our former irregularities require tears, shame, and sorrow to expiate them. Let us offer up these sacrifices from our hearts; let us blush, let us weep.—If in these weak beginnings, Lord, our heart is not entirely thine, let it at least be made sensible that it ought to be so!

Deliver yourself Eloisa, from the shameful remains of a passion which has taken too deep root. Remember that the least thought for any other than God is an adultery. If you could see me here with my meagre face, and melancholy air, surrounded with numbers of persecuting monks, who are alarmed at my reputation for learning, and offended at my lean visage, as if I threatened them with a reformation; what would you say of my base sighs, and of those unprofitable tears which deceive these credu-

lous men. Alas! I am humbled under love, and not under the cross. Pity me, and free yourself. If your vocation be, as you say, my work, deprive me not of the merit of it by your continual inquietudes. Tell me that you will honour the habit which covers you, by an inward retirement. Fear God, that you may be delivered from your frailties. Love him, if you would advance in virtue. Be not uneasy in the cloister, for it is the dwelling of saints. Embrace your bands, they are the chains of Christ Jesus: he will lighten them, and bear them with you, if you bear them with humility.

Without growing severe to a passion which yet possesses you, learn from your own misery to succour your weak sisters; pity them upon consideration of your own faults. And if any thoughts too natural shall importune you, fly to the foot of the cross, and beg for mercy; there are wounds open; lament before the dying Deity. At the head of a religious society be not a slave, and having rule over queens, begin to govern yourself. Blush at the least revolt of your senses. Remember that even at the foot of the altar we often sacrifice to lying spirits, and that no incense can be more agreeable to them, than that which, in those holy places, burns in the heart of a religious still sensible of passion and love. If, during your abode in the world, your soul has acquired a habit of loving, feel it now no more but for Jesus Christ. Repent of all the moments of your life which you have wasted upon the world, and upon pleasure; demand them of me; 'tis a robbery which I am guilty of; take courage, and boldly reproach me with it.

I have been indeed your master, but it was only to teach you sin. You call me your father; before I had any claim to this title, I deserved that of parricide. I am your brother, but it is the affinity of our crimes that has purchased me that distinction. I

am called your husband, but it is after a public scandal. If you have abused the sanctity of so many venerable names in the superscription of your letter, to do me honour, and flatter your own passion, blot them out, and place in their stead those of a murderer, a villain, an enemy, who has conspired against your honour, troubled your quiet, and betrayed your innocence. You would have perished through my means, but for an extraordinary act of grace, which, that you might be saved, has thrown me down in the middle of my discourse.

This is the idea you ought to have of a fugitive, who endeavours to deprive you of the hope of seeing him any more. But when love has once been sincere, how difficult is it to determine to love no more! 'Tis a thousand times more easy to renounce the world than love. I hate this deceitful faithless world; I think no more of it; but my heart, still wandering, will eternally make me feel the anguish of having lost you, in spite of all the convictions of my understanding. In the mean time, though I should be so cowardly as to retract what you have read, do not suffer me to offer myself to your thoughts, but under this last notion. Remember my last endeavours were to seduce your heart. You perished by my means, and I with you. The same waves swallowed us both up. We waited for death with indifference, and the same death had carried us headlong to the same punishments. But providence has turned off this blow, and our shipwreck has thrown us into a haven. There are some whom the mercy of God saves by afflictions. Let my salvation be the fruit of your prayers! Let me owe it to your tears or exemplary holiness! Though my heart, Lord! be filled with the love of one of thy creatures, thy hand can, when it pleases, draw out of it those ideas which fill its whole capacity. To love Eloisa truly, is to leave her entirely to that quiet which retirement and

virtue afford. I have resolved it ; this letter shall be my last fault. Adieu.

If I die here, I will give orders that my body be carried to the house of the Paraclete. You shall see me in that condition ; not to demand tears from you, 'twill then be too late : weep rather for me now, to extinguish that fire which burns me. You shall see me, to strengthen your piety by the honour of this carcase ; and my death, then more eloquent than I can be, will tell you what you love, when you love a man. I hope you will be contented, when you have finished this mortal life, to be buried near me. Your cold ashes need then fear nothing, and my tomb will by that means be more rich and more renowned.

LETTER IV.

ELOISA TO ABELARD.

In the following letter the passion of Eloisa breaks out with more violence than ever. That which she had received from Abelard, instead of fortifying her resolutions, served only to revive in her memory all their past endearments and misfortunes. With this impression, she writes again to her husband; and appears now not so much in the character of a religious striving with the remains of her former weakness, as in that of an unhappy woman abandoned to all the transports of love and despair.

*To Abelard her well-beloved in Christ Jesus, from
Eloisa his well-beloved in the same Christ Jesus.*

I READ the letter I received from you with abundance of impatience: in spite of all my misfortunes, I hoped to find nothing in it besides arguments of comfort. But how ingenious are lovers in tormenting themselves! Judge of the exquisite sensibility and force of my love, by that which causes the grief of my soul. I was disturbed at the superscription of your letter; why did you place the name of Eloisa before that of Abelard; what means this cruel and unjust distinction? 'Twas your name only, the name of a father, and of a husband, which my eager eyes sought after. I did not look for my own, which I had much rather, if possible, forget, as being the

cause of your misfortune. The rules of decorum, and the character of master and director which you have over me, opposed that ceremonious manner of addressing me : and love commanded you to banish it. Alas! you know all this but too well.

Did you write thus to me before cruel fortune had ruined my happiness? I see your heart has deserted me, and you have made greater advances in the way of devotion than I could wish : alas! I am too weak to follow you; condescend at least to stay for me, and animate me with your advice. Will you have the cruelty to abandon me? The fear of this stabs my heart ! but the fearful presages you make at the latter end of your letter, those terrible images you draw of your death, quite distract me. Cruel Abelard! you ought to have stopped my tears, and you make them flow. You ought to have quieted the disorder of my heart, and you throw me into despair.

You desire that after your death I should take care of your ashes, and pay them the last duties. Alas! in what temper did you conceive these mournful ideas? And how could you describe them to me? Did not the apprehension of causing my present death make the pen drop from your hand? You did not reflect, I suppose, upon all those torments to which you were going to deliver me. Heaven, as severe as it has been against me, is not in so great a degree so, as to permit me to live one moment after you. Life, without my Abelard, is an unsupportable punishment, and death a most exquisite happiness, if by that means I can be united with him. If heaven hears the prayers I continually make for you, your days will be prolonged, and you will bury me.

Is it not your part to prepare me, by your powerful exhortations, against that great crisis, which shakes the most resolute and confirmed minds? Is it not your part to receive my last sighs, take care of my

funeral, and give an account of my manners and faith? Who but you can recommend us worthily to God, and, by the fervour and merit of your prayers, conduct those souls to him which you have joined to his worship by solemn contracts? We expect these pious offices from your paternal charity. After this you will be free from those disquietudes which now molest you, and you will quit life with more ease whenever it shall please God to call you away. You may follow us content with what you have done, and in a full assurance of our happiness. But till then write not to me any such terrible things! Are we not already sufficiently miserable? Must we aggravate our sorrows? Our life here is but a languishing death; will you hasten it? Our present disgraces are sufficient to employ our thoughts continually, and shall we seek for new arguments of grief in futurities? "How void of reason are men," said Seneca, "to make distant evils present by reflection, and to take pains before death to lose all the comforts of life!"

When you have finished your course here below, you say it is your desire that your body be carried to the house of the Paraclete; to the intent that being always exposed to my eyes, you may be for ever present to my mind; and that your dead body may strengthen our piety, and animate our prayers. Can you think that the traces you have drawn in my heart can ever be worn out; or that any length of time can obliterate the memory we have here of your benefits? And what time shall I find for those prayers you speak of? Alas! I shall then be filled with other cares. Can so heavy a misfortune leave me a moment's quiet? Can my feeble reason resist such powerful assaults? When I am distracted and raving (if I dare say it) even against Heaven itself, I shall not soften it by my prayers, but rather provoke it by my cries and reproaches. But how should I pray, or

how bear up against my grief? I should be more urgent to follow you, than to pay you the sad ceremonies of burial. It is for you, for Abelard, that I have resolved to live: if you are ravished from me, what use can I make of my miserable days? Alas! what lamentations should I make, if Heaven, by a cruel pity, should preserve me till that moment! When I but think of this last separation, I feel all the pangs of death; what shall I be then, if I should see this dreadful hour! Forbear, therefore, to infuse into my mind such mournful thoughts, if not for love, at least for pity.

You desire me to give myself up to my duty, and to be wholly God's, to whom I am consecrated. How can I do that, when you frighten me with apprehensions that continually possess my mind day and night? When an evil threatens us, and it is impossible to ward it off, why do we give up ourselves to the unprofitable fear of it, which is yet even more tormenting than the evil itself?

What have I to hope for after this loss of you? What can confine me to earth, when death shall have taken away from me all that was dear upon it! I have renounced, without difficulty, all the charms of life, preserving only my love, and the secret pleasure of thinking incessantly of you, and hearing that you live. And yet, alas! you do not live for me, and I dare not even flatter myself with the hopes that I shall ever enjoy a sight of you more! This is the greatest of my afflictions. Merciless Fortune! hast thou not persecuted me enough! Thou dost not give me any respite; thou hast exhausted all thy vengeance upon me, and reserved thyself nothing whereby thou may'st appear terrible to others. Thou hast wearied thyself in tormenting me, and others have nothing now to fear from thy anger. But to what purpose dost thou still arm thyself against me? The wounds I have already received leave no room for

new ones. Why cannot I urge thee to kill me! or dost thou fear, amidst the numerous torments thou heapest on me, dost thou fear that such a stroke would deliver me from all? therefore thou preservest me from death in order to make me die every moment.

Dear Abelard, pity my despair! Was ever any thing so miserable? The higher you raised me above other women who envied me your love, the more sensible am I now of the loss of your heart. I was exalted to the top of happiness, only that I might have a more terrible fall. Nothing could formerly be compared to my pleasure, and nothing now can equal my misery. My glory once raised the envy of my rivals; my present wretchedness moves the compassion of all that see me. My fortune has been always in extremes, she has heaped on me her most delightful favours, that she might load me with the greatest of her afflictions. Ingenious in tormenting me, she has made the memory of the joys I have lost an inexhaustible spring of my tears. Love, which possessed was her greatest gift, being taken away occasions all my sorrow. In short, her malice has entirely succeeded, and I find my present afflictions proportionably bitter as the transports which charmed me were sweet.

But what aggravates my sufferings yet more is, that we began to be miserable at a time when we seemed the least to deserve it. While we gave ourselves up to the enjoyment of a criminal love, nothing opposed our vicious pleasures. But scarce had we retrenched what was unlawful in our passion, and taken refuge in marriage against that remorse which might have pursued us, but the whole wrath of heaven fell on us in all its weight. But how barbarous was your punishment! the very remembrance makes me shake with horror. Could an outrageous husband make a villain suffer more that had dishonoured

his bed? Ah! what right had a cruel uncle over us! We were joined to each other even before the altar, which should have protected you from the rage of your enemies. Must a wife draw on you that punishment which ought not to fall on any but an adulterous lover! Besides, we were separated; you were busy in your exercises, and instructed a learned auditory in mysteries, which the greatest geniuses before you were not able to penetrate; and I, in obedience to you, retired to a cloister. I there spent whole days in thinking of you, and sometimes meditating on holy lessons, to which I endeavoured to apply myself. In this very juncture you became the victim of the most unhappy love. You alone expiated the crime common to us both: you only were punished, though both of us were guilty. You, who were least so, was the object of the whole vengeance of a barbarous man. But why should I rave at your assassins! I, wretched I, have ruined you! I have been the original of all your misfortunes! Good heaven! why was I born to be the occasion of so tragical an accident! How dangerous is it for a great man to suffer himself to be moved by our sex! He ought from his infancy to be inured to insensibility of heart, against all our charms. "Hearken, my son," said formerly the wisest of men, "attend and keep my instructions: If a beautiful woman by her looks endeavour to entice thee, permit not thyself to be overcome by a corrupt inclination; reject the poison she offers, and follow not the paths which she directs. Her house is the gate of destruction and death." I have long examined things, and have found that death itself is a less dangerous evil than beauty. 'Tis the shipwreck of liberty, a fatal snare, from which it is impossible ever to get free. 'Twas woman which threw down the first man from that glorious condition in which Heaven had placed him. She who was created in order to partake of his hap-

piness, was the sole cause of his ruin. How bright had been thy glory, Sampson, if thy heart had been as firm against the charms of Delilah, as against the weapons of the Philistines! A woman disarmed and betrayed thee, who had been a glorious conqueror of armies! Thou sawest thyself delivered into the hands of thy enemies! Thou wast deprived of thy eyes, those inlets of love into thy soul! Distracted and despairing didst thou die, without any consolation but that of involving thy enemies in thy destruction! Solomon, that he might please women, forsook the care of pleasing God. That king whose wisdom princes came from all parts to admire, he whom God had chose to build him a temple, abandoned the worship of those very altars he had defended, and proceeded to such a pitch of folly as even to burn incense to idols. Job had no enemy more cruel than his wife. What temptations did he not bear! The evil spirit who had declared himself his persecutor, employed a woman as an instrument to shake his constancy. And the same evil spirit made Eloisa an instrument to ruin Abelard! All the poor comfort I have is, that I am not the voluntary cause of your misfortunes. I have not betrayed you; but my constancy and love have been destructive to you. If I have committed a crime in having loved you with constancy, I shall never be able to repent of that crime. Indeed I gave myself up too much to the captivity of those soft errors into which my rising passion seduced me. I have endeavoured to please you, even at the expence of my virtue, and therefore deserve those pains I feel. My guilty transports could not but have a tragical end! As soon as I was persuaded of your love, alas! I scarce delayed a moment resigning myself to all your protestations. To be beloved by Abelard was, in my esteem, too much glory, and I too impatiently desired it, not to believe it immediately. I endeavoured at nothing

but convincing you of my utmost passion. I made no use of those defences of disdain and honour; those enemies of pleasure, which tyrannize over our sex, made in me but a weak and unprofitable resistance. I sacrificed all to my love, and I forced my duty to give place to the ambition of making happy the most gallant and learned person of the age. If any consideration had been able to stop me, it would have been without doubt the interest of my love. I feared lest having nothing further for you to desire, your passion might become languid, and you might seek for new pleasures in some new conquest. But it was easy for you to cure me of a suspicion so opposite to my own inclination. I ought to have foreseen other more certain evils; and to have considered that the idea of lost enjoyments would be the trouble of my whole life.

How happy should I be, could I wash out with my tears the memory of those pleasures which yet I think of with delight! At least I will exert some generous endeavour, and, by smothering in my heart those desires to which the frailty of my nature may give birth, I will exercise torments upon myself, like those the rage of your enemies has made you suffer. I will endeavour by that means to satisfy you at least, if I cannot appease an angry God. For to show you what a deplorable condition I am in, and how far my repentance is from being available, I dare even accuse Heaven every moment of cruelty, for delivering you into those snares which were prepared for you. My repinings kindle the divine wrath, when I should endeavour to draw down mercy.

In order to expiate a crime, 'tis not sufficient that we bear the punishment; whatever we suffer is accounted as nothing, if the passions still continue, and the heart is inflamed with the same desires. 'Tis an easy matter to confess a weakness, and to inflict

some punishment upon ourselves; but it is the last violence to our nature to extinguish the memory of pleasures which, by a sweet habit, have gained absolute possession of our minds. How many persons do we observe who make an outward confession of their faults, yet, far from being afflicted for them, take a new pleasure in the relating them. Bitterness of heart ought to accompany the confession of the mouth, yet that very rarely happens. I who have experienced so many pleasures in loving you, feel, in spite of myself, that I cannot repent of them, nor forbear enjoying them over again as much as is possible, by recollecting them in my memory. Whatever endeavours I use, on whatever side I turn me, the sweet idea still pursues me, and every object brings to my mind what I ought to forget. During the still night, when my heart ought to be quiet in the midst of sleep, which suspends the greatest disturbances, I cannot avoid those illusions my heart entertains. I think I am still with my dear Abelard. I see him, I speak to him, and hear him answer. Charmed with each other, we quit our philosophic studies to entertain ourselves with our passion. Sometimes, too, I seem to be a witness to the bloody enterprize of our enemies; I oppose their fury; I fill our apartment with fearful cries, and in the moment I wake in tears. Even into holy places, before the altar, I carry with me the memory of our guilty loves. They are my whole business; and, far from lamenting for having been seduced, I sigh for having lost them.

I remember (for nothing is forgot by lovers) the time and place in which you first declared your love to me, and swore you would love me till death. Your words, your oaths, are all deeply graven in my heart. The disorder of my discourse discovers to every one the trouble of my mind. My sighs betray me; and your name is conti-

nually in my mouth. When I am in this condition why dost not thou, O Lord! pity my weakness, and strengthen me by thy grace? You are happy, Abelard, this grace has prevented you; and your misfortune has been the occasion of your finding rest. The punishment of your body has cured the deadly wounds of your soul. The tempest hast driven you into the haven. God, who seemed to lay his hand heavily upon you, sought only to help you. He is a father chastising, and not an enemy revenging; a wise physician, putting you to some pain in order to preserve your life. I am a thousand times more to be lamented than you; I have a thousand passions to combat with. I must resist those fires which love kindles in a young heart. Our sex is nothing but weakness, and I have the greater difficulty to defend myself, because the enemy that attacks me pleases; I doat on the danger which threatens me, how then can I avoid falling!

In the midst of these struggles I endeavour, at least, to conceal my weakness from those you have entrusted to my care. All who are about me admire my virtue; but could their eyes penetrate into my heart, what would they not discover! My passions there are in a rebellion; I perside over others, but cannot rule myself. I have but a false covering, and this seeming virtue is a real vice. Men judge me praise-worthy, but I am guilty before God, from whose all-seeing eye nothing is hid, and who views, through all their foldings, the secrets of all hearts. I cannot escape his discovery. And yet it is a great deal to me to maintain even this appearance of virtue. This troublesome hypocrisy is in some sort commendable. I give no scandal to the world, which is so easy to take bad impressions. I do not shake the virtue of these feeble ones who are under my

conduct. With my heart full of the love of man, I exhort them, at least, to love only God. Charmed with the pomp of worldly pleasures, I endeavour to show them that they are all deceit and vanity. I have just strength enough to conceal from them my inclinations, and I look upon that as a powerful effect of grace. If it is not sufficient to make me embrace virtue, it is enough to keep me from committing sin.

And yet it is in vain to endeavour to separate these two things. They must be guilty who merit nothing; and they depart from virtue who delay to approach it. Besides, we ought to have no other motive than the love of God; alas! what can I then hope for! I own, to my confusion, I fear more the offending a man, than the provoking God; and study less to please him than you. Yes, it was your command only and not a sincere vocation, as is imagined, that shut me up in these cloisters. I sought to give you ease, and not to sanctify myself. How unhappy am I? I tear myself from all that pleases me: I bury myself here alive; I exercise myself in the most rigid fastings and such severities as cruel laws impose on us; I feed myself with tears and sorrows; and, notwithstanding this, I deserve nothing for all the hardships I suffer. My false piety has long deceived you as well as others: you have thought me easy, yet I was more disturbed than ever. You persuaded yourself I was wholly taken up with my duty, yet I had no business but love. Under this mistake you desire my prayers; alas! I must expect yours. Do not presume upon my virtue and my care. I am wavering, and you must fix me by your advice. I am yet feeble, you must sustain and guide me by your counsel.

What occasion had you to praise me? Praise is often hurtful to those on whom it is bestowed. A secret vanity springs up in the heart, blinds

us, and conceals from us wounds that are ill cured. A seducer flatters us, and at the same time aims at our destruction. A sincere friend disguises nothing from us, and far from passing a light hand over the wound, makes us feel it more intensely by applying remedies. Why do you not deal after this manner with me? Will you be esteemed a base dangerous flatterer; or, if you chance to see any thing commendable in me, have you no fear that vanity, which is so natural to all women, should quite efface it? But let us not judge of virtue by outward appearances, for then the reprobate, as well as the elect, may lay claim to it. An artful imposter may by his address gain more admiration than the true zeal of a saint.

The heart of man is a labyrinth whose windings are very difficult to be discovered. The praises you give me are the more dangerous, in regard that I love the person who gives them, The more I desire to please you, the readier am I to believe all the merit you attribute to me. Ah, think rather how to support my weaknesses by wholesome remonstrances! Be rather fearful than confident of my salvation; say our virtue is founded upon weakness, and that those only will be crowned who have fought with the greatest difficulties; but I seek not for that crown which is the reward of victory, I am content to avoid only the danger. It is easier to keep off, than to win a battle. There are several degrees in glory, and I am not ambitious of the highest; those I leave to souls of great courage who have been often victorious. I seek not to conquer, out of fear lest I should be overcome. Happy enough, if I can escape shipwreck, and at last gain the port. Heaven commands me to renounce that fatal passion which unites me to you; but, oh! my heart will never be able to consent to it, Adieu!

LETTER V.

ELOISA TO ABELARD.

Eloisa had been dangerously ill at the convent of the Paraclete : immediately upon her recovery she wrote this letter to Abelard. She seems now to have disengaged herself from him, and to have resolved to think of nothing but repentance ; yet discovers some emotions which make it doubtful whether devotion had entirely triumphed over her passion.

DEAR Abelard, you expect, perhaps, that I should accuse you of negligence. You have not answered my last letter ; and, thanks to heaven, in the condition I now am, it is a happiness to me that you show so much insensibility for the fatal passion which had engaged me to you ; at last, Abelard, you have lost Eloisa for ever ! Notwithstanding all the oaths I made to think of nothing but you only, and to be entertained with nothing but you, I have banished you from my thoughts ; I have forgot you. Thou charming idea of a lover I once adored, thou wilt no more be my happiness ! Dear image of Abelard, thou wilt no more follow me every where, I will no more remember thee ! O, celebrated merit of a man who, in spite of his enemies, is the wonder of his age ! O, enchanting pleasures to which Eloisa entirely resigned herself, you, you have been my tormentors ! I confess, Abelard, without a blush, my infidelity. Let my inconstancy teach the world

that there is no depending upon the promises of woman; they are all subject to change. This troubles you, Abelard; this news, without doubt, surprises you; you could never imagine Eloisa should be inconstant. She was prejudiced by so strong an inclination to you, that you cannot conceive how time could alter it. But be undeceived; I am going to discover to you my falseness; though, instead of reproaching me, I persuade myself you will shed tears of joy. When I shall have told you what rival hath ravished my heart from you, you will praise my inconstancy, and will pray this rival to fix it. By this you may judge that it is God alone that takes Eloisa from you. Yes, my dear Abelard, he gives my mind that tranquillity which a quick remembrance of our misfortunes would not suffer me to enjoy. Just Heaven! what other rival could take me from you! Could you imagine it possible for any mortal to blot you from my heart? Could you think me guilty of sacrificing the virtuous and learned Abelard to any other but to God? No, I believe you have done me justice in this point. I question not but you are impatient to know what means God used to accomplish so great an end; I will tell you, and wonder at the secret ways of Providence. Some few days after you sent me your last letter I fell dangerously ill; the physicians gave me over; and I expected certain death. Then it was that my passion, which always before seemed innocent, appeared criminal to me. My memory represented faithfully to me all the past actions of my life; and I confess to you, my love was the only pain I felt. Death, which till then I had always considered as at a distance, now presented itself to me such as it appears to sinners. I began to dread the wrath of God, now I was going to experience it; and I repented I had made no better use of his grace. Those tender letters I have wrote to you, and those

passionate conversations I have had with you, give me as much pain now as they formerly did pleasure. Ah! miserable Eloisa, said I, if it is a crime to give one's self up to such soft transports; and if, after this life is ended, punishment certainly follows them, why didst thou not resist so dangerous an inclination! Think on the tortures that are prepared for thee, consider with terror that store of torments, and recollect at the same time those pleasures which thy deluded soul thought so entrancing. Ah! pursued I, dost thou not almost despair for having rioted in such false pleasures? In short, Abelard, imagine all the remorse of mind I suffered, and you will not be astonished at my change.

Solitude is insupportable to a mind which is not easy; its troubles increase in the midst of silence, and retirement heightens them. Since I have been shut up within these walls, I have done nothing but weep for our misfortunes. This cloister has resounded with my cries; and, like a wretch condemned to eternal slavery, I have worn out my days in grief and sighing. Instead of fulfilling God's merciful design upon me, I have offended him: I have looked upon this sacred refuge like a frightful prison, and have borne with unwillingness the yoke of the Lord. Instead of sanctifying myself by a life of penitence, I have confirmed my reprobation. What a fatal wandering! But Abelard, I have torn off the bandage which blinded me, and, if I dare rely upon the emotions which I have felt, I have made myself worthy of your esteem. You are no more that amorous Abelard who, to gain a private conversation with me by night, used incessantly to contrive new ways to deceive the vigilance of our observers. The misfortune which happened to you after so many happy moments gave you a horror for vice, and you instantly consecrated the rest of your days to virtue, and seemed to submit to this necessity willingly.

I indeed, more tender than you, and more sensible of soft pleasures, bore this misfortune with extreme impatience. You have heard my exclamation against your enemies. You have seen my whole resentment in those letters I wrote to you. 'Twas this, without doubt, which deprived me of the esteem of my Abelard. You were alarmed at my transports, and, if you will confess the truth, you perhaps despaired of my salvation. You could not foresee that Eloisa would conquer so reigning a passion, but you have been deceived, Abelard; my weakness, when supported by grace, hath not hindered me from obtaining a complete victory. Restore me then to your good opinion; your own piety ought to solicit you to this.

But what secret trouble rises in my soul, what unthought-of motion opposes the resolution I have formed of sighing no more for Abelard! Just Heaven! have I not yet triumphed over my love? Unhappy Eloisa! as long as thou drawest a breath, it is decreed thou must love Abelard! Weep, unfortunate wretch that thou art, thou never had a more just occasion! Now I ought to die with grief; grace had overtaken me, and I had promised to be faithful to it; but I now perjure myself, and sacrifice even grace to Abelard. This sacrilegious sacrifice fills up the measure of my iniquities. After this can I hope God should open to me the treasures of his mercy! Have I not tired out his forgiveness? I began to offend him from the moment I first saw Abelard; an unhappy sympathy engaged us both in a criminal commerce; and God raised us up an enemy to separate us. I lament and hate the misfortune which hath lighted upon us, and adore the cause. Ah! I ought rather to explain this accident as the secret ordinance of Heaven, which disapproved of our engagement, and apply myself to extirpate my passion. How much better were it entirely to forget the object of it, than to pre-

serve the memory of it, so fatal to the quiet of my life and salvation! Great God! shall Abelard always possess my thoughts! can I never free myself from those chains which bind me to him! But perhaps I am unreasonably afraid; virtue directs all my motions, and they are all subject to grace. Fear no more, dear Abelard! I have no longer any of those sentiments which, being described in my letters, have occasioned you so much trouble. I will no more endeavour, by the relation of those pleasures our new-born passion gave us, to awaken that criminal fondness you may have for me. I free you from all your oaths; forget the name of lover and husband, but keep always that of father. I expect no more from you those tender protestations, and those letters so proper to keep up the commerce of love. I demand nothing of you but spiritual advice and wholesome directions. The path of holiness, however thorny it may be, will yet appear agreeable when I walk in your steps. You will always find me ready to follow you. I shall read with more pleasure the letters in which you shall describe to me the advantages of virtue, than ever I did those by which you so artfully instilled the fatal poison of our passion. You cannot now be silent, without a crime. When I was possessed with so violent a love, and pressed you so earnestly to write to me, how many letters did I send you before I could obtain one from you! You denied me in my misery the only comfort which was left me, because you thought it pernicious. You endeavoured by severities to force me to forget you; nor can I blame you; but now you have nothing to fear. A lucky disease, which Providence seemed to have chastised me with for my sanctification, hath done what all human efforts, and your cruelty, in vain attempted. I see now the vanity of that happiness which we had set our hearts upon, as if we were never to have lost it.

What fears, what uneasiness have we been obliged to suffer!

No, Lord, there is no pleasure upon earth but that which virtue gives! The heart amidst all worldly delights feels a sting; it is uneasy and restless till fixed on thee. What have I not suffered, Abelard, while I kept alive in my retirement those fires which ruined me in the world? I saw with horror the walls which surround me, the hours seemed as long as years. I repented a thousand times the having buried myself here. But since grace has opened my eyes all the scene is changed. Solitude looks charming, and the tranquillity which I behold here enters my very heart. In the satisfactions of doing my duty, I feel a pleasure above all that riches, pomp, or sensuality could afford. My quiet has, indeed, cost me dear; I have bought it even at the price of my love; I have offered a violent sacrifice, and which seemed above my power. I have torn you from my heart, and be not jealous; God reigns there in your stead, who ought always to have possessed it entire. Be content with having a place in my mind, which you shall never lose; I shall always take a secret pleasure in thinking of you and esteem it a glory to obey those rules you shall give me.

This very moment I receive a letter from you; I will read it and answer it immediately. You shall see by my exactness in writing to you, that you are always dear to me.—You very obligingly reproach me for delaying so long to write you any news: my illness must excuse that. I omit no opportunities of giving you marks of my remembrance. I thank you for the uneasiness you say my silence has caused you, and the kind fears you express concerning my health. Yours, you tell me, is but weakly, and you thought lately you should have died. With what indifference, cruel man! do you acquaint me with a thing so certain to afflict me! I told you in my former

letter how unhappy I should be if you died; and if you loved me, you would moderate the rigour of your austere life. I represented to you the occasion I had for your advice, and consequently the reason there was you should take care of yourself. But I will not tire you with the repetition of the same things. You desire us not to forget you in our prayers. Ah! dear Abelard, you may depend upon the zeal of this society, it is devoted to you, and you cannot justly charge it with forgetfulness. You are our father, we your children; you are our guide, and we resign ourselves with assurance in your piety; you command, we obey; we faithfully execute what you have prudently directed; we impose no penance on ourselves but what you recommend, lest we should rather follow an indiscreet zeal than solid virtue. In a word, nothing is thought rightly done if without Abelard's approbation. You inform me of one thing that perplexes me, that you have heard that some of our sisters gave bad examples, and that there is a general looseness amongst them. Ought this to seem strange to you, who know how monasteries are filled now-a-days? Do fathers consult the inclinations of their children when they settle them? Are not interest and policy their only rules? This is the reason that monasteries are often filled with those who are a scandal to them. But I conjure you to tell me what are the irregularities you have heard of, and to teach me a proper remedy for them. I have not yet observed that looseness you mention; when I have I will take due care. I walk my rounds every night, and make those I catch abroad return to their chambers; for I remember all the adventures which happened in the monasteries near Paris. You end your letter with a general deploring of your unhappiness, and wish for death as the end of a troublesome life. Is it possible a genius so great as yours should never get above his past misfortunes! What

would the world say, should they read your letters as I do? Would they consider the noble motive of your retirement, or not rather think you had shut yourself up only to lament the condition to which my uncle's revenge had reduced you? What would your young pupils say, who come so far to hear you, and prefer your severe lectures to the softness of a worldly life, if they should see you secretly a slave to your passions, and sensible of all those weaknesses from which your rules can secure them? This Abelard they so much admire; this great personage which guides them, would lose his fame, and become the scorn of his pupils. If these reasons are not sufficient to give you constancy in your misfortunes, cast your eyes upon me, and admire my resolution of shutting myself up by your example. I was young when we were separated, and (if I dare believe what you were always telling me) worthy of any gentleman's affections. If I had loved nothing in Abelard but sensual pleasure, a thousand agreeable young men might have comforted me upon my loss of him. You know what I have done, excuse me, therefore, from repeating it; think of those assurances I gave you of loving you with the utmost tenderness. I dried your tears with kisses, and because you were less powerful I became less reserved. Ah! if you had loved with delicacy, the oaths I made, the transports I accompanied them with, the innocent caresses I profusely gave you, all this sure might have comforted you. Had you observed me to grow by degrees indifferent to you, you might have had reason to despair; but you never received greater marks of my passion, than after that cruel revenge upon you.

Let me see no more in your letters, dear Abelard, such murmurs against Fortune; you are not the only one she has persecuted, and you ought to forget her outrages. What a shame is it for a philosopher not

to be comforted for an accident that might have happened to any man. Govern yourself by my example. I was born with violent passions ; I daily strive with the most tender emotions, and glory in triumphing and subjecting them to reason. Must a weak mind fortify one that is so much superior ! But whither am I transported ! Is this discourse directed to my dear Abelard ! One that practises all those virtues he teaches ! If you complain of Fortune, it is not so much that you feel her strokes, as that you cannot show your enemies how much to blame they were in attempting to hurt you. Leave them, Abelard, to exhaust their malice, and continue to charm your auditors. Discover those treasures of learning Heaven seems to have reserved for you ; your enemies, struck with the splendour of your reasoning, will do you justice. How happy should I be, could I see all the world as entirely persuaded of your probity as I am. Your learning is allowed by all the world ; your greatest enemies confess you are ignorant of nothing that the mind of man is capable of knowing.

My dear husband, (this is the last time I shall use that expression) shall I never see you again ? Shall I never have the pleasure of embracing you before death ? What dost thou say, wretched Eloisa ! Dost thou know what thou desirest ! Canst thou behold those lively eyes without recollecting those amorous glances which have been so fatal to thee ! Canst thou view that majestic air of Abelard, without entertaining a jealousy of every one that sees so charming a man ! that mouth which cannot be looked upon without desire ! in short, all the person of Abelard cannot be viewed by any woman without danger. Desire, therefore, no more to see Abelard ; if the memory of him has caused thee so much trouble, Eloisa, what will not his presence do ! What desires will it not excite in thy soul ! How will it be possible

for thee to keep thy reason at the sight of so amiable a man ! I will own to you what makes the greatest pleasure I have in my retirement. After having passed the day in thinking of you, full of the dear idea, I give myself up at night to sleep: then it is that Eloisa, who dares not without trembling think of you by day, resigns herself entirely to the pleasure of hearing you, and speaking to you. I see you, Abelard, and glut my eyes with the sight ; sometimes you entertain me with the story of your secret troubles and grievances, and create in me a sensible sorrow ; sometimes, forgetting the perpetual obstacles to our desires, you press me to make you happy, and I easily yield to your transports. Sleep gives what your enemies' rage has deprived you of ; and our souls, animated with the same passion, are sensible of the same pleasure. But, oh ! you delightful illusions, soft errors, how soon do you vanish away ! At my awaking I open my eyes to see no Abelard ; I stretch out my arm to take hold of him, but he is not there ; I call him, he hears me not. What a fool am I to tell you my dreams, who are insensible of these pleasures ! But do you, Abelard, never see Eloisa in your sleep ? How does she appear to you ? Do you entertain her with the same tender language as formerly, when Fulbert committed her to your care ? When you awake, are you pleased or sorry ? Pardon me, Abelard, pardon a mistaken lover. I must no more expect that vivacity from you which once animated all your actions. It is no more time to require from you a perfect correspondence of desires. We have bound ourselves to severe austerities, and must follow them, let them cost never so dear. Let us think of our duties in these rigours, and make a good use of that necessity which keeps us separate. You, Abelard, will happily finish your course ; your desires and ambitions will be no obstacle to your salvation. Eloisa only must lament ; she

only must weep, without being certain whether all her tears will be available or not to her salvation.

I had like to have ended my letter without acquainting you with what happened here a few days ago. A young nun, who was one of those who are forced to take up with a convent without any examination whether it will suit with their tempers or not, is, by a stratagem I know nothing of, escaped; and, as they say, fled with a young gentleman she was in love with into England. I have ordered all the house to conceal the matter. Ah! Abelard, if you were near us these disorders would not happen. All the sisters, charmed with seeing and hearing you, would think of nothing but practising your rules and directions. The young nun had never formed so criminal a design as that of breaking her vows, had you been at our head to exhort us to live holily. If your eyes were witnesses of our actions, they would be innocent. When we slipt you would lift us up, and establish us by your counsels; we should march with sure steps in the rough paths of virtue. I begin to perceive, Abelard, that I take too much pleasure in writing to you. I ought to burn my letter. It shows you I am still engaged in a deep passion for you, though at the beginning of it I designed to persuade you of the contrary; I am sensible of the motions both of grace and passion, and by turns yield to each. Have pity, Abelard, of the condition to which you have brought me, and make in some measure the latter days of my life as quiet as the first have been uneasy and disturbed.

LETTER VI.

ABELARD TO ELOISA.

Abelard, having at last conquered the remains of his unhappy passion, had determined to put an end to so dangerous a correspondence as that between Eloisa and himself. The following letter therefore, though written with no less concern than his former, is free from mixtures of a worldly passion, and is full of the warmest sentiments of piety, and the most moving exhortations.

WRITE no more to me, Eloisa, write no more to me ; it is time to end a commerce which makes our mortifications of no advantage to us. We retired from the world to sanctify ourselves ; and by a conduct directly contrary to Christian morality, we become odious to Jesus Christ. Let us no more deceive ourselves, by flattering ourselves with the remembrance of our past pleasures, we shall make our lives troublesome, and we shall be incapable of relishing the sweets of solitude. Let us make a good use of our austerities, and no longer preserve the ideas of our crimes amongst the severities of penitence. Let a mortification of body and mind, a strict fasting, continual solitude, profound and holy meditations, and a sincere love of God, succeed our former irregularities.

Let us try to carry religious perfection to a very difficult point. It is beautiful to find in Christianity

minds so disengaged from the earth, from the creatures, and themselves, that they seem to act independently of those bodies they are joined to, and to use them as their slaves. We can never raise ourselves to too great heights when God is the object. Be our endeavours ever so great, they will always come short of reaching that exalted divinity which even our apprehensions cannot reach. Let us act for God's glory, independent of the creatures or ourselves, without any regard to our own desires, or the sentiments of others. Were we in this temper of mind, Eloisa, I would willingly make my abode at the Paraclete. My earnest care for a house I have founded, would draw a thousand blessings on it. I would instruct it by my words, and animate it by my example. I would watch over the lives of my sisters, and would command nothing but what I myself would perform. I would direct you to pray, meditate, labour, and keep vows of silence ; and I would myself pray, meditate, labour, and be silent.

However, when I spoke it should be to lift you up when you should fall, to strengthen you in your weaknesses, to enlighten you in that darkness and obscurity which might at any time surprise you. I would comfort you under those severities used by persons of great virtue. I would moderate the vivacity of your zeal and piety, and give your virtue an even temperament : I would point out those duties which you ought to know, and satisfy you in those doubts which the weakness of your reason might occasion. I would be your master and father ; and by a marvellous talent I would become lively, slow, soft, or severe, according to the different characters of those I should guide in the painful path of christian perfection.

But whither does my vain imagination carry me ! Ah, Eloisa, how far are we from such a happy temper ! Your heart still burns with that fatal fire which you

cannot extinguish, and mine is full of trouble and uneasiness. Think not, Eloisa, that I enjoy here a perfect peace; I will, for the last time, open my heart to you; I am not yet disengaged from you; I fight against my excessive tenderness for you; yet, in spite of all my endeavours, the remaining frailty makes me but too sensible of your sorrows, and gives me a share in them. Your letters have, indeed, moved me; I could not read with indifference characters wrote by that dear hand. I sigh, I weep, and all my reason is scarce sufficient to conceal my weakness from my pupils. This, unhappy Eloisa, is the miserable condition of Abelard! The world, which generally errs in its notions, thinks I am easy; and, as if I had loved only in you the gratification of sense, imagines I have now forgot you; but what a mistake is this! People, indeed, did not mistake in thinking, when we separated, that shame and grief for having been so cruelly used made me abandon the world. 'Twas not, as you know, a sincere repentance for having offended God which inspired me with a design of retiring; however, I considered the accident which happened to us as a secret design of Providence to punish our crimes; and only looked upon Fulbert as the instrument of divine vengeance.—Grace drew me into an asylum, where I might yet have remained, if the rage of my enemies would have permitted: I have endured all their persecutions, not doubting but God himself raised them up in order to purify me.

When he saw me perfectly obedient to his holy will, he permitted that I should justify my doctrine; I made its purity public, and showed in the end that my faith was not only orthodox, but also perfectly clear from even the suspicion of novelty.

I should be happy if I had none to fear but my enemies, and no other hinderance to my salvation but their calumny; but, Eloisa, you make me trouble;

your letters declare to me that you are enslaved to a fatal passion; and yet if you cannot conquer it you cannot be saved; and what part would you have me take in this case? Would you have me stifle the inspiration of the Holy Ghost? Shall I, to soothe you, dry up those tears which the evil spirit makes you shed; shall this be the fruit of my meditations? No; let us be more firm in our resolutions; we have not retired but in order to lament our sins, and to gain heaven; let us then resign ourselves to God with all our heart.

I know every thing in the beginning is difficult, but it is glorious to undertake the beginning of a great action; and that glory increases proportionably as the difficulties are more considerable. We ought upon this account to surmount bravely all obstacles which might hinder us in the practice of christian virtue. In a monastery men are proved as gold in the furnace. No one can continue long there, unless he bear worthily the yoke of our Lord.

Attempt to break those shameful chains which bind you to the flesh, and if by the assistance of grace you are so happy as to accomplish this, I entreat you to think of me in your prayers. Endeavour with all your strength to be the pattern of a perfect Christian; it is difficult, I confess, but not impossible; and I expect this beautiful triumph from your teachable disposition. If your first endeavours prove weak, give not yourself up to despair; that would be cowardice; besides I would have you informed, that you must necessarily take great pains, because you strive to conquer a terrible enemy, to extinguish raging fire, and to reduce to subjection your dearest affections; you must fight against your own desires, be not, therefore, pressed down with the weight of your corrupt nature. You have to do with a cunning adversary, who will use all means to seduce you; be always upon your guard. While we live we are exposed to temptations;

this made a great saint say, that "the whole life of man was a temptation;" the devil, who never sleeps, walks continually around us, in order to surprise us on some unguarded side, and enters into our soul to destroy it.

However perfect any one may be, yet he may fall into temptations, and, perhaps, into such as may be useful. Nor is it wonderful that man should never be exempt from them, because he hath always in himself their source, concupiscence; scarce are we delivered from one temptation but another attacks us. Such is the lot of the posterity of Adam, that they should always have something to suffer, because they have forfeited their primitive happiness. We vainly flatter ourselves that we shall conquer temptations by flying; if we join not patience and humility, we shall torment ourselves to no purpose. We shall more certainly compass our end by imploring God's assistance, than by using any means drawn from ourselves.

Be constant, Eloisa! trust in God, and you will fall into few temptations; whenever they shall come, stifle them in their birth; let them not take root in your heart. Apply remedies to a disease, said an ancient, in its beginning, for when it hath gained strength medicine will be unavailable; temptations have their degrees, they are at first mere thoughts, and do not appear dangerous; the imagination receives them without any fears; a pleasure is formed out of them, we pause upon it, and at last we yield to it.

Do you now, Eloisa, applaud my design of making you walk in the steps of the saints? Do my words give you any relish for penitence? Have you not remorse for your wanderings, and do you not wish you could, like Magdalen, wash our Saviour's feet with your tears? If you have not yet these ardent emotions, pray that he would inspire them. I shall

never cease to recommend you in my prayers, and always beseech him to assist you in your desire of dying holily. You have quitted the world, and what object was worthy to detain you there? Lift up your eyes always to him to whom you have consecrated the rest of your days. Life upon this earth is misery. The very necessities to which our body is subject here, are matter of affliction, to a saint. "Lord," said the royal prophet, "deliver me from my necessities!" They are wretched who do not know themselves for such; and yet they are more wretched who know their misery, and do not hate the corruption of the age. What fools are men to engage themselves to earthly things! They will be undeceived one day, and will know but too late how much they have been to blame in loving such false good. Persons truly pious do not thus mistake, they are disengaged from all sensual pleasures, and raise their desires to heaven. Begin, Eloisa; put your designs in execution without delay; you have yet time enough to work out your salvation. Love Christ, and despise yourself for his sake. He would possess your heart, and be the sole object of your sighs and tears; seek for no comfort but in him. If you do not free yourself from me, you will fall with me; but if you quit me, and give up yourself to him, you will be stedfast and immoveable. If you force the Lord to forsake you, you will fall into distress; but if you be ever faithful to him, you will be always in joy. Magdalen wept, as thinking the Lord had forsaken her. But Martha said, "See, the Lord calls you." Be diligent in your duty, and obey faithfully the motions of his grace, and Jesus will remain always with you.

Attend, Eloisa, to some instructions I have to give you. You are at the head of a society, and you know there is this difference between those who lead a private life, and such as are charged with the conduct of others; that the first need only labour for their own sanctification, and in acquainting themselves of their

duties are not obliged to practise all the virtues in such an apparent manner; whereas they who have the conduct of others intrusted to them, ought by their example to engage them to do all the good they are capable of in their condition. I beseech you to attend to this truth, and so to follow it, as that your whole life may be a perfect model of that of a religious recluse.

God, who heartily desires our salvation, hath made all the means of it easy to us. In the Old Testament he hath written in the tables of the law what he requires of us, that we might not be bewildered in seeking after his will. In the New Testament he hath written that law of grace in our hearts, to the intent that it might be always present with us; and, knowing the weakness and incapacity of our nature, he hath given us grace to perform his will; and, as if this were not enough, he hath at all times, in all states of the church, raised up men, who by their exemplary life might excite others to their duty. To effect this, he hath chosen persons of every age, sex, and condition. Strive now to unite in yourself all those virtues which have been scattered in these different states. Have the purity of virgins, the austerity of anchorites, the zeal of pastors and bishops, and the constancy of martyrs. Be exact, in the course of your whole life, to fulfil the duties of a holy and enlightened superior, and then truth, which is commonly considered as terrible, will appear agreeable to you.

“The death of his saints,” says the prophet, “is precious in the sight of the Lord.” Nor is it difficult to comprehend why their death should have this advantage over that of sinners. I have remarked three things which might have given the prophet an occasion of speaking thus. First, their resignation to the will of God. Secondly, the continuation of their good works. And lastly, the triumph they gain over the devil.

A saint who has accustomed himself to submit to

the will of God, yields to death without reluctance. He waits with joy, says St. Gregory, for the judge who is to reward him ; he fears not to quit this miserable mortal life, in order to begin an immortal happy one. It is not so with the sinner, says the same father ; he fears, and with reason ; he trembles at the approach of the least sickness ; death is terrible to him, because he cannot bear the presence of an offended judge, and having so often abused the grace of God, he sees no way to avoid the punishment due to his sins.

The saints have besides this advantage over sinners, that having made works of piety familiar to them during their life, they exercise them without trouble : and having gained new strength against the devil every time they overcame him, they will find themselves in a condition at the hour of death to obtain that victory over him, on which depends all eternity, and the blessed union of their souls with their Creator.

I hope, Eloisa, that after having deplored the irregularities of your past life, you will die (as the prophet prayed) the death of the righteous. Ah ! how few are there who make their end after this manner ? And why ? It is because there are so few who love the cross of Christ. Every one would be saved, but few will use those means which religion prescribes. And yet we can be saved by nothing but the cross, why then do we refuse to bear it ? Hath not our Saviour borne it before us, and died for us, to the end that we might also bear it, and desire to die also ? All the saints have been afflicted, and our Saviour himself did not pass one hour of his life without some sorrow. Hope not, therefore, to be exempt from sufferings. The cross, Eloisa, is always at hand, but take care that you do not bear it with regret, for by so doing you will make it more heavy, and you will be oppressed by it unprofitably. On the contrary, if you bear it with affection and courage, all your suf-

ferings will create in you a holy confidence, whereby you will find comfort in God. Hear our Saviour, who says, "My child, renounce yourself, take up your cross and follow me." Oh, Eloisa! do you doubt? Is not your soul ravished at so saving a command? Are you deaf to his voice? Are you insensible to words so full of kindness? Beware, Eloisa, of refusing a husband who demands you, and is more to be feared, if you slight his affection, than any profane lover. Provoked at your contempt and ingratitude, he will turn his love into anger, and make you feel his vengeance. How will you sustain his presence, when you shall stand before his tribunal? He will reproach you for having despised his grace; he will represent to you his sufferings for you. What answer can you make? He will then be implacable. He will say to you, Go, proud creature, dwell in everlasting flames; I separated you from the world to purify you in solitude, and you did not second my design. I endeavoured to save you, and you took pains to destroy yourself: go, wretch, and take the portion of the reprobates.

Oh, Eloisa! prevent these terrible words, and avoid by a holy course the punishment prepared for sinners. I dare not give you a description of those dreadful torments which are the consequences of a life of guilt. I am filled with horror when they offer themselves to my imagination. And yet, Eloisa, I can conceive nothing which can reach the tortures of the damned: the fire which we see upon earth is but the shadow of that which burns them; and without enumerating their endless pains, the loss of God which they feel increases all their torments. Can any one sin who is persuaded of this? My God! can we dare to offend thee? Though the riches of thy mercy could not engage us to love thee, the dread of being thrown into such an abyss of misery should

restrain us from doing any thing which might displease thee !

I question not, Eloisa, but you will hereafter apply yourself in good earnest to the business of your salvation. This ought to be your whole concern. Banish me, therefore, for ever from your heart ; 'tis the best advice I can give you : for the remembrance of a person we have loved criminally cannot but be hurtful, whatever advances we have made in the ways of virtue. When you have extirpated your unhappy inclination towards me, the practice of every virtue will become easy ; and when at last your life is conformable to that of Christ, death will be desirable to you. Your soul will joyfully leave this body, and direct its flight to heaven. Then you will appear with confidence before your Saviour : you will not read characters of your reprobation written in the book of life ; but you will hear your Saviour say, “ Come, partake of my glory, and enjoy the eternal reward I have appointed for those virtues you have practised.

Farewel, Eloisa ! This is the last advice of your dear Abelard ; this last time, let me persuade you to follow the holy rules of the Gospel. Heaven grant that your heart, once so sensible of my love, may now yield to be directed by my zeal ! May the idea of your loving Abelard, always present to your mind, be now changed into the image of Abelard, truly penitent ! and may you shed as many tears for your salvation as you have done during the course of our misfortunes !

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